THE RIVER FLOWS

THE RIVER FLOWS

F. L. LUCAS

"For a moment, while you held me fast in your outstretched arms,
I thought the river stood still and did not flow. . . .
Hush, hush, all things pass with the waters of the eastward-flowing river."

Chinese Poem.

PUBLISHED BY LEONARD & VIRGINIA WOOLF AT THE
HOGARTH PRESS, 52 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.
1926

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

TO SEBASTIAN

THE RIVER FLOWS

January 3rd, 1913. *Dungeon Ghyll.*

Escaped! To get away. To be alone. To breathe. How one chokes there!—the hot rooms, the smoke in one's eyes, the corpses of cigarettes weltering in the coffee-cups. And the waking next morning, tired and thinking of the night before. . . . "Chatter till two—Philip very amusing, but that toad of a 'blue' wouldn't go away, and it all went on too long—and what has come of it but cigarette-ends in saucers? Well, but what do you expect to come of it? What—God knows!"

And now . . . if one were always perfectly well, I suppose, one would never ask or feel anything so ridiculous. "Red corpuscles" and all that. . . . They don't make the world actually any less bloody; but one sees, not feels how detestable it is. And the mere seeing it one can stand. Oh, very philosophically—with that due sense of disproportion necessary to happiness. But Cambridge—fens—fogs—blue devils. Why was I so miserable last term? "You, David, with your peculiarly happy temperament. . . ." While poor Philip, who has not a "happy temperament", had

to endure from me that perpetual causeless dissatisfaction. Yet now, because I've walked twenty-six miles alone, in half-a-dozen blizzards, and skinned one shin, and twice got lost, I feel perfectly happy.

Really, this is becoming appalling. It might be an athletic bore discoursing on the duty of "keeping fit"—I shall be slapping myself on the back next. And yet the terrible truth remains—so ignominious!—that making oneself hot and uncomfortable is, apparently, a better remedy against being wretched about life, than all the intelligent suggestions in Burton's *Anatomy*, from the philosophy to the spiders mashed in hellebore. If it were only possible to remember that—O future self, when next you writhe over the emptiness of the world, and the futility of learning, and because there's no soul you can call your own and because you care more for Philip than Philip for you, turn back to this page. And much good it will do you—the consolation to the lunatic of being told he is insane. That he knew too well before.

I suppose it will always be the same with me. There are those who give and who take, the born lovers and the born lovees. For somehow love always seems to be odd and incapable of dividing quite evenly into two; leaving a vulgar fraction of some one's heart in the end. And the same in friendship. Intolerably sentimental it sounds. Yet I have in fact always seemed to care more than whoever it was; perhaps always shall. I

should be happier if I were the other kind of person; and yet, complacent toad, wouldn't change—though it hurts horribly at times.

Or would it be happiest of all never to give oneself away, never to care unwisely; to live self-dependent, self-sufficing, alone? Doubtless whichever one does, one repents it; as Socrates said of marrying or not marrying. But to-day, for instance, has been so perfect, by myself; and last term so wretched, sometimes, with Philip. There was the morning sun from my window at Shap on the far soft curves of snow; the mocking of the curlews from the grey stone walls as I started through the fields; and then the white silences of Kidsty Pike, with Hawes Water black as Styx below. It was ecstasy, intoxicating, absurd. I could have danced, chanting choruses from *The Bacchae*—

> and all the mountain there
> Went wild and revelled with them, all its beasts,
> And all the waste was quickened, leapt, and lived.

It was unutterably perfect—and yet I was, rather fortunately no doubt, alone. No "beasts" except some intrigued and disapproving sheep, nothing else living for leagues and leagues and leagues; only sun and sky and snow; and the long-backed hills pasturing in silence and unshepherded, from Scotland to the sea.

Remembered here by the inn-fire, with a wind outside and the shadows dancing witch-like round the walls, that quarter of an hour seems both

ridiculous and very real. I've never been happier. I wanted nothing; I just was. No asking, then, what came of it all, what Life was for.

It was so clearly itself, and sufficient in itself. And I was alone; it would not have happened otherwise. I have friends—there's Philip—that I couldn't live without. And yet how black the sight of a single one of them dotting the horizon at that moment would have been! The world was so incredibly beautiful, one wanted to lose oneself with it, alone. The beauty was an essential part of it, but not all. Beauty isn't so rare in the world; but this was a transfiguration, of it and me. A mystic would have found it meant endless, untellable things—unions and communions and the rest of it. But the whole point of it was that it signified nothing; it just was. Yet it resurrects all over again the dreary old question, that haunts me now, of what *is* worth while. If the life of the senses proves, as to-day, so much more alive than the life of the brain, why am I going back in a week to Cambridge, to stuff dead languages and strain for a Fellowship, with eventual apotheosis, I suppose, into a don, instead of fiddling over the hills and far away? How well I remember my last morning at Rugby with old Stevenage talking about my future, and, when I kicked at a learned life for ever, saying pedagogically, "Ah yes, Halliday, but I hardly think of you as a man of action"; and my angry flushing because it sounded, somehow, so shameful, and seemed half true!

And, more important, is it perhaps best, after all, to be alone? I seem always to have been struggling to escape it, to possess this friend or that. Perhaps it's impossible; perhaps it's not even worth while. Hugh's horror-struck comment on some one getting married—"Think of it, never, never to be properly alone again!" Instead of being like Hugh himself, never so dependent on people that they inevitably let you down, never knowing them so well that you find them out. . . .

> Alone the sun arises, and alone
> Spring the great streams.

This is all nonsense. I know well enough that nothing will really alter what I shall do. One must live. I shall go my way, live a Fellow—"respecting nobody in the University and respected by nobody outside it"—and die on a College staircase. I shall become a Lecturer; at thirty-five, precisely, as a last sign of animation, I shall marry (the daughter of a Rural Dean); half a century later it will transpire from an obituary in *The Cambridge Review* that I once existed. I know it; and you, my subsequent self, perusing this some day through four pairs of spectacles, don't say I did not tell you so.

It's frightful. Why was I born with this fatal gift of passing examinations? I shall go to bed and dream I am a Regius Professor. Then things may go by opposites.

January 5th. Ennerdale.

I shall never succeed in keeping a diary—even of my feelings. What does one feel after forty-eight hours' rain? Nothing fit to put on decent paper. It doesn't matter. If I have nothing to say, I shall say nothing; after the excellent, though rude, tradition of Cambridge tea-parties. My deplorable tendency to regular habits just wants putting in its place. Or rather Philip's letter shall do vicarious atonement and fill the blank for me, with much more interest ten years hence, than confessions which will tell me nothing then but my own innocence.

WINEASTER, *Jan. 3rd*, 1913.

DEAR DAVID,

This may catch you at Ennerdale, unless you've characteristically overrun your own programme through finding you could "champ" twice round your Lakes in a week instead of once. One has to allow, too, for your rooted love of extemporizing something new at the thirteenth hour, which makes every holiday of yours an omelette of broken plans. By way of a little extra improvisation, come and stay with me here for the last three or four days of the Vac., so that we can go back to Cambridge together. Your angel-guardian of an uncle has had his share of you already; and the Lakes theirs. I suppose a Yorkshire stream will be very small beer after your mountain-torrents; but you can make Wineaster easily a stepping-stone to lower things at Cambridge. This is frankly my selfishness, of course. You'll hate it here. When we are alone together my mother and I form a mutual depression society in the damps of a country January. Hugh has been here but he vanished on the

thirty-first. He is changing already from the quiet Fawcett who went down only last June, into a Civil Servant obviously doomed to dreadful eminence. That is to say, his needle of a mind seems a little sharper still, and the eye of him makes one feel more of a lumbering great camel than ever. No heart, of course, and quite inhuman; but charming.

I've been depressed since he went; though that fact perhaps is already written in capitals between the lines of this. I envy you your vitality, David, that sends you leaping like a possessed scapegoat up and down your wilderness. While I sit here, *fin de siècle*, rather *fin de dix-huitième siècle*—with no Romantic Revival in sight! I suppose it *is* just vitality. I get so tired that I fall asleep at odd moments and wake up, perhaps, as now, with another grey day already dusk outside. Then, by the firelight, the room goes ghostly—one sees suddenly through the trappings, the furniture, the feeble little barriers one's self has collected to fence away the horrible, impersonal universe, out to the blank, indifferent void behind. It's like that when I sit up too late alone in my rooms in Cambridge. How many have sat there before one, that are forgotten; how many will, before the end! *They* felt so secure—it was *their* castle—they forgot all the names painted out beneath their own above the outer door. But I can't forget. I could scream, sometimes, to stop time only for a moment, to stop things passing, passing, passing. Yes, I'm "morbid", doubtless. Call it by any other name, it feels as foul. It's as if we were all climbing up an endless ladder, swinging in the void to all the winds that blow. We know there is somewhere above us a rung which we shall not pass, where we shall drop off spinning into eternity. You're vital, David. You don't realise the horror, your head doesn't turn. You'd tell me to take more exercise. Oh my dear David, that June you introduced me to your mountains, it didn't do at all. I didn't have the right emotions. Or you were jealous

about the fells as if they were your mistresses—own it! And be careful, or you'll get like old Wordsworth who wouldn't allow anybody else to appreciate the scenery at all. Go on, bless you, über Berg und Tal all day, with a copy of the *Inferno*, I dare say, in your pocket, to keep you warm and cheerful at your evening inn. But come over to Macedon after.—Yours, PHILIP.

Poor Philip. I must go, of course. He doesn't so much want me, as distraction—a looking-glass to play with. Never mind. But what's wrong with him? It isn't mere vitality—put him in some one's rooms, give him an audience, and he's far livelier than I ever feel. We're so terribly like, yet so different, my gloom is never so passive as his, I always want at least to hit back at things. With him it's the real medieval *accidie*—Dante would have shoved him with the "Sullen and Wrathful" into that material Slough of Despond—

> Tristi fummo
> nell' aer dolce che dal sol s' allegra,
> portando dentro accidioso fumo—

but that wouldn't have helped matters much. Will he end by taking to drink or devoutness? Or am I vapouring, and will the Philip of twenty years hence be a chubby, tubby gentleman, with no cares higher than his stomach or bigger than his bank-balance? Perhaps we shall both be that. Isn't that worst of all? And yet why shouldn't one's poor body wander on for a few years after one's dead, being pleasantly titillated? Of course it's beastly for one's living fellow-

creatures; but lots of them are dead too and lots more don't mind being paid undertakers.

But it makes me want friends again. Five days quite alone. Even epiphanies of Dionysus on snowy hilltops are not all-sustaining. This is what becomes of consistency in five days; no matter, as the ingenious poet remarked:

> Do I contradict myself? Well then I contradict myself.
> I am large, I contain multitudes.

January 10*th*. *Wineaster*, 11 P.M.

There are things and days of which one has a sudden intuition—"I shall always remember this". True, one never does; I cannot recall now, when I try, a single one of those repeated occasions. But it's a pleasant feeling; and I've had it both yesterday and to-day. Philip had pitched my expectations of the place itself too low, to begin with. It was going to be an anti-climax after the great moments of Westmoreland, the hills one learns to know like people, each with a personality of its own—so magnificent, so aloof, yet so friendly in the end. But there has not been a bathos, after all. When Philip met me at Hawes, dark round the eyes and pale and charming (he gets so much pleasure into his pleased moments), I expected to be driven over some dull abomination of desolation, an assortment of blasted heaths looking particularly blasted under a January sky. It wasn't that at all. The far sweep of the fells as we wound across them, was gay with slanting green and

gold; a black rabbit or two lolloped comfortably away from the grind of the wheels; the stream at the dale-bottom was dense with friendly trees; and there lay the low house of Wineaster, squatting in the distance like a grey mouse with bright sunset eyes under the great green cushion of its hill. I thought I knew England; and to come suddenly on all this uncharted beauty, wide with a surging boundlessness for which the imagination had left no room, made it all seem like some country not of earth, not really existent, some unterrestrial faery that might dissolve the next moment under waking eyes. And to-day, too, it was different, but even more immense, when we followed a feeder of the Swale to its rising high up the fells, and that grey unshapen eternity of heaving earth and driving cloud seemed vast and void and formless as the infinite chaos before the coloured world was made.

And in three days, the intellectual east winds of Cambridge again; and all the rhapsodies gone out of this! But we *must* come here together once more. Philip has been charming—only one flash of the old suspiciousness, when he taxed me with talking to Hugh about him. Just like Philip; he never will stake his belief in one's affection and loyalty (if he has any belief) against the most superficial appearances. Always assumes the most incredible motives. "If you think me going to the devil, at least let me go without breaking my shins at every step over your good intentions." He shore off the heads of

half-a-dozen thistles as he said it ; looking so Spanishly attractive with dark eyes and sudden flush, that I could only half repent.

" But, Philip, I said nothing about your ' going to the devil '."

" I don't mind a damn what particular phrase you happened to coin."

" I didn't coin phrases about you at all—these are your own forgeries."

" Well, my good David, what *did* you say? "

" Only that I hoped you'd find some work you liked doing, when you go down next June. You won't stay on at Cambridge? "

" No, never! "

" You won't *have* to take up any profession, if you choose to live on your own income?—if you live here at Wineaster, anyway? But if you live here half the year, say . . . I'm just rather anxious. O Philip, you don't make things peculiarly easy."

" I don't want to. Anxious about what? And, anyway, why discuss me with other people? "

" But Hugh is the person we both know best. He has, you yourself say, the best brain of us all. And that cool intellect of his (which is a perpetual pain and grief to some people) is just what makes him a perfect oracle for any one like us, lucky enough to know him and intelligent enough to appreciate."

" Do you think because Hugh has the best brain in the Foreign Office, he is going to help you arrange my life for me? What does he know

about me? I'm not an Eastern Question. If there's anything I hate, it's this feeling that I am being conspired about. Let me alone, damn you!"

And then seeing me crestfallen, I suppose, "Well, what about a little retaliation? What do you propose to do? For all you know, I may disapprove."

"Oh, I shall have about two hundred a year, even if I miss a Fellowship. I've decided against staying up permanently in any case. I shall eke it out with journalism."

"But this is sudden, David. What, reviewing? Poisoning your own brain with the refuse of other people's! Criticism! People with nothing to say saying it about some one else. A literary parasite and parrot . . . no, I shall talk seriously to Hugh about you at once. But, in all earnest, David, I'm tired of it. Because you were brought up by an uncle, don't think you were born one,—anyway, one of mine. Don't imagine you can plot me into happiness. You'll lose your time and my temper."

It was ironic enough that within two hours his mother should be conspiring with me on the identical subject. After tea, the moment Philip had had to go out, with the firelight throwing alternate light and darkness over hawky face and iron-grey hair, she opened her attack. I suppose I might have expected something of the kind from the look of that shiny stiff collar and stiffer chin. But such a questionnaire I never underwent: she

knew in a quarter of an hour more of my past, present, and future, than I had ever put connectedly together for myself. And then without a moment's pause—"Well, you're thinking you've struck an original—no one you ever met quite so rude. However, it isn't interest in your personal fascinations. Your generation isn't interested in mine and I return the compliment. That's just as it should be. I'm thinking about Philip. I don't see much of his friends. He doesn't bring them here a great deal for my inspection, when I'm at Wineaster. There was that Fawcett person the other day. You like him?"

"Frightfully."

"I didn't. In any case he wouldn't have been much use for my purpose. Do you dance?"

"Yes, a certain amount—not very much. But I don't quite see . . ."

"Well, that's something. I want some one to look after Philip. He's going to leave Cambridge. Thinks he's going to write—here at Wineaster, mind you. I dare say. It might be better for him if he went into a bank: but he's his own master. I'm concerned with his happiness, not his readers'. It isn't because he's taken to these fits of depression. The young are always as idiotic in their despairs as their enthusiasms—half the time crying for the moon, the other half thinking they've caught it in a butterfly-net. But considering his father's melancholia—Oh, Philip hasn't ever told you about that? He recovered before his death. I took him away and we

8445

travelled up and down Europe a great deal for years. He was artistic and his mania for Old Masters saved him. I shall never enter another picture-gallery so long as I live.

"Come, you needn't look so upset. The Wintons were a dalesman stock and too in-bred; my side of the family's healthy enough. But we're wandering.

"Philip wants looking after—by some one of his own age. It's no use one generation thinking it can do that for another. Apron-strings only strangle. And friends—oh! friends are all very well at Cambridge. You think yourselves romantically lifelong, but writing once and meeting twice a year won't melt much ice."

"But what more *can* one do?"

"Do? You can find some one to marry Philip. Cries of horror? Oh, I know you young people regard marriage as the next thing to making your wills. Terribly prudent we've all become. Philip is twenty-three this year. With an extra hundred and fifty a year that I can find him, added to what he has, he can afford to marry well enough; provided he doesn't marry a fool. An extra need to work a little won't hurt him. Oh, I suppose you think I'm pushing my business—nobody's business—on to your shoulders. Well, I've done what I can. But I'm Victorian. My sort of wife isn't Philip's. He complains because they can't argue with him about the nature of good or the last Russian novel. Not that he wants to argue about them himself, but you've

persuaded him between you at Cambridge that he does. However, when God for His own reasons created the young men of this generation, I take it He made females to match. Only they don't come my way. No doubt they are bred in Cambridge. Not in your Women's Colleges, of course; they keep their young women like white mice, I gather. Chaperones, bless you—yes, *chaperones* complaining of sex inequality! Let them begin by abolishing themselves, if that's what they want. But that's by the way. You dance—you meet people—Cambridge, London, I don't care where. Well, you may be able to find some young woman who smokes and swears and intellectualizes to Philip's taste. Oh, don't look so romantically shocked. That's the way it's done, my dear. It doesn't look any less pretty on the stage for a little efficient managing behind the scenes.

" But, mind you, not some creature out of one of your modern novels—so choked with psychology there's no room for any character. I'm antiquated. I don't come down below Meredith. After your modern fiction, so true to life that one can't remember so much as the people's names six months later, I go back to Dickens for a little emphasis. . . .

" You understand me? I don't expect you to produce a seraglio. But perhaps there's some hope that you may keep Philip in touch with something else besides amateur philosophers like that Fawcett, who look as if they preserved their

friends in ice. Philip isn't really one of you intellectuals. He'd much better break his heart over half-a-dozen women than go embracing clouds. And it won't be easy for whoever marries him. But that's her affair. And the sooner the better. I believe he's enough my son not to marry a fool. But he's enough his father's son to be pretty helpless about finding a woman for himself."

The torrent ceased for a moment and I got my breath.

" Curiously enough, it was only this afternoon that Philip was cursing me for trying to ' plot him into happiness ', as he put it, with the help of Hugh Fawcett."

" I dare say, my dear, if you were clumsy enough to get found out, and if you say anything of our discussion this evening, Philip will probably never speak to you again. It merely proves what I said about Fawcett."

" No, it's simply that Hugh always ignores Philip's feelings when he considers them silly. The policy works all right for him; I only wish I had the strength of mind to do the same. But anyway, about the whole question (and I felt while I said it, as if I were charging a battery) I can't really agree; because you see, I don't think one ought to get married—at least, for years yet. I do understand that with Philip there are reasons. But marriage is bad enough anyway—pledging yourself about a thing which is about as much in your control as the weather ten years hence—I

mean that you will go on loving the same person, and never any one else, for the rest of your life. And it's particularly awful when you're as young as we are, with such a long time before and so little experience behind. I always think of Selden's remark on the matter of getting married —that the frogs in Æsop were 'extream wise', because though they wanted the water in the well so badly, they foresaw that if they jumped in, they could never get out again."

I expected a storm after this: but my frankness went down unexpectedly well.

"Oh, I dare say you feel frog-like. In the tadpole stage, even. By all means. Have your wild-oats—roses—what-not? Only wild oats are thin porridge at fifty; not nearly so good as an intelligent housekeeper. I never said people should marry in haste, but young. You *must* take risks."

"Well, I promise you I'll do anything I see my way to—though I must say I feel like an Aztec king swearing at the beginning of the year to keep the sun in its proper course. I see your point about his meeting more different kinds of people; though you're not fair to Hugh, and if you saw some of Philip's Cambridge acquaintances! . . . So many sorts and conditions. And I'd like nothing better than to have him to stay with me in London, whenever possible. But I'm not really the right person for your purposes at all. You see, I'm rather a misogynist too. If I dance, it's because I like motion, not young women.

And I should be frightfully jealous, too, about his being snatched away. And I really do hate not telling Philip everything, though he doesn't give me credit for that. This afternoon he made me feel that all this whispering about him, as if he were quite incapable of looking after himself, is after all a little absurd."

"Yes, I see you're just like the rest of them. You see so many points of view, you can't ever bear to do anything. Well, if you won't——" But at this point we heard Philip at the door. "What, Philip, back already? We have been having a great conversation. You never told me Mr. Halliday was such a talker."

January 12th.

To-morrow Cambridge. I never so hated going back to that mill-race. Now I shall have to share Philip again with the rest of the world; and it has been so delightful here, alone. Even that fantastic woman has her points; I like her plain-Janishness. I suspect she's more obstinate than strong and not very clever. But she isn't really completely mad about Philip. I can see that he will need some real companionship. But why, why shouldn't it be me? That's what I felt so violently the other night; though of course, it was quite impossible to say it. And yet friendship—the words of Theocritus—

> A single nest set in a single tree
> Where no wild crawling thing shall ever climb.

Yet I'm only being mawkish. For we shan't ever be able to live together again—I in London, Philip, I suppose, here in Yorkshire—or else abroad. Of course, if only I thought he had found a woman good enough, I'd swallow jealousy—at least I think I could muster enough self-control not to make myself absurd. But then I think it because I don't really believe in his finding one; I suppose intelligent women do exist outside books. I've known one—two—three. But when one does find them, by some law of nature they're invariably married already.

Why, why do I mind in this ridiculous, proprietary way? I'm far more she-bearish about Philip than his mother is. And yet I'm frightfully critical of him; especially when out of sight of that fascinating dark-framed white face, the black hair, the hawk-like profile. But it makes so little difference, anyway, seeing through people. By the time George Meredith had proposed six times over to that Peacock woman, if my uncle's story is true, he too must have known her picture pretty thoroughly, shadows as well as high lights; and yet it didn't destroy the fatal fascination, or prevent the seventh and too successful attempt, with *Modern Love* to follow. It isn't familiarity that breeds contempt, I suppose, but possession. And Philip is unpossessable—it's like a landscape when the beauty hurts you—it lies there so perfect, so swiftly passing, and one longs, without knowing how, to snatch and hold it for ever for one's own. "Verweile doch, du bist so schön!"

And yet even if it did stay, it would still be just as impossible as ever to possess. Feasting the eyes is only filling the belly with the east wind, and if things are like that with Nature, it's ten thousand times worse with a person. Perhaps if he really returned my feeling for him it would be all right. But perhaps then, too, the radiance would soon be gone. Ah, if one were an artist, then that treacherous auxiliary, the verb "to have" might cease to betray one into these imbecilities, and there might be a little peace. Is to re-create artistically the one way of feeling that one has really caught and captured "a joy for ever"? Yet Art, too, is only make-believe—a Heaven that one has to become rather childish in order to enter, that fades a little before the too-intelligent. There are plenty of ways of running away from oneself, if it comes to that—going religious or becoming a successful business-man, or just turning oneself into an extrovert like Wordsworth in middle-age and dying except to the external world. But then the "dead" can never be quite safe against re-awakening; when it's become too late to live. And I don't want in the least to get middle-aged and sensible and impersonal. I'd rather mind intensely about people —and remember it, too, even though it hurt. It would be simpler to forget: but one doesn't want to be simple. It's too easy by *not* taking thought to subtract some comfortable cubits from one's stature. "When you're as old as I am. . . ." Oh, we become that soon enough. We go down

and into professions and rub off our noses on grindstones and get tired and say "No" to things and prate of self-denial (because we've long since denied altogether the selves we used to give utterly away) and thank the gods, like senile Sophocles, that we have lost our passions and are thoroughly prudential and negative and safe and rotten and respectable. How I hate the middle-aged!

I want Philip for myself. And yet I love him enough to lose him. But I won't pretend that I like it and say "Thank you".

January 13th. Cambridge.

Like waking after a too-pleasant dream. This morning at Wineaster seems a thousand miles and a thousand years away. One of those grey winter mornings when everything seems to hold its breath—with the sun behind a half-transparent haze of cloud, climbing nun-like up the sky, through a hush you could hear. Even the gritting of the wet road under the slow wheels up the hill could not break the calm strength of the spell. And now . . . the clatter of feet on stone staircases sweating with Cambridge damp. It sounds so thankless; but I'm in no mood to be fair to-day.

Philip left, of course, his spectacles in the train and his right-hand glove in the taxi; and we somehow found it the most amusing thing in the world. And now . . . I foresee a cessation of these outpourings here, dried up in the heat of term and the special aridity of Cambridge east winds. Just

as well that it should be so too; I was getting terribly sentimental. And it would never do to have the full-length, gilded mirror of introspection becoming so large and expensive that all one's other mental furniture had to go to pawn for it.

February 19th.

As I thought, half the term has slipped away in silence. So much the better. Happy the hours that have no history. And indeed I have enjoyed this term more than any before. . . . in a sober sort of way. Of course Philip *will* display that curious tolerance of his for athletic bores; it's been awful, the number of times I have tip-toed up his staircase to listen at his door and heard only some throaty bass boring away inside, and gone cursing back again. How I hate hearty people—the people you hear enjoying their soup at the feast of life! How can he bear them? Of course I don't expect him to be as wrapped up in me as I in him; that does not happen to me, as I learnt long ago at school. And yet after all perhaps it's better to have rivals one despises and knows at bottom not to be very serious.

What sentimental hysteria all this would seem to any one who didn't know by experience this strange side of human feelings! "Not at all healthy, not at all." *The Times* on the first appearance of *In Memoriam* sniffing at such overstrained devotion to "an Amaryllis of the Chancery Bar. . . ." Amaryllis' papa, the elder

Hallam, wishing Shakespeare's *Sonnets* had never been written—the toads, what did they know about it? It may all be imbecile, but what did they know? I suppose Hugh thinks it imbecile too; but at least he understands. He wasn't really a bit changed, whatever Philip may say, when he came up last week-end. Saturday evening in Philip's rooms brought him out perfectly, with all that peculiar pleasure you have when a person is being characteristic—really himself, as you know that self to be. I expect astronomers, before their science arrived at its present blasé exactitude, had the same sort of thrill when some comet, homing sunwards out of the darknesses of space, glimmered once more upon their field of view, precisely as and when and where it should. For (*a*) the accurately predicted is felt to be truly known, and (*b*) there is the rather different pleasure of getting the odd pieces of a person's characteristics fitted into your pattern of the whole. Not that it's a simple pattern in Hugh. So faunish-looking, yet so highly civilized; the brown, slightly foreign eyes and soft look of a woodland thing, yet the white taper fingers of the *salon*; that momentary verbal stammer, yet such complete freedom from any mental one; gentle and yet hard, soft and yet cold, an eighteenth-century pastoral, a crucible of porcelain. . . . Oh, one could festoon him with necklaces of antitheses. And the chief of them is that he is so full of contrasts and yet such a unity. Likes you, yet will hardly forgive your

showing you know it; would do anything for those he likes except show he liked them; is taken in by nothing and no one, and yet has a touch of worldliness that less keen-eyed and critical people—Philip himself, for instance—often escape. Take that remark of Cromwell's which I've always loved him for—" Sir, see what multitudes come to attend your triumph."—" Still more would come to see me hanged." Hugh would never have felt and said that, but Philip might. It's rather fun caricaturing him like this—but a portrait—no! Philip is one quarter repelled by him, three quarters fascinated: I am attracted even in disagreement. I suppose I set a higher value on people who are never boring, because so many more people bore me. Philip can be interested in blues, while they only make me feel that colour. And so when, the other night, some demurely bitter remark from Hugh, as he lay curled back in his chair, stung Philip into flinging that too stale charge of heartlessness, I had to go over to the enemy; to Philip's further embitterment. " Really, Hugh, though you are one year senior by birth and fifty by disposition, you needn't be so Olympian. Because a man like Knyvett is less confident about his intellectual eminence than we like to be, I don't see why you need walk through him as if he were so much air."

" I don't walk through him, Philip, he's far too solid a young man. I walk by on the other side. All I said was that I thought him second-rate."

" Which means, to you, of no importance."

" Well, of no interest."

" Yes, but, though you're much too wary to say so, damn you—you make one feel, and you know perfectly well you do, that you think it waste of time to know people like him."

" So I do."—" But why? "—" Some people make intelligent conversation impossible. There's a thing that you, Philip, probably disdain to have heard of, called Gresham's Law, to the effect that bad currency drives out good. It applies to conversation."

" Well, but that's just where you are wrong. It isn't merely this particular case. Your whole life is based on the attitude that you're a sort of God of Epicurus, enjoying the world as a very amusing spectacle. You're not a Socialist, because under Socialism there would be no rich, and so no one to buy your artist-friends' pictures and the caviar-makers would have to shut down. You won't utter a word to suggest to people like Knyvett that the Thirty-nine Articles aren't self-evident axioms, because you take the line that those who haven't the brains to lose their faith for themselves by the time they are nineteen, had better be left with it. You don't really come here to see us—you like our sort of conversation just as you like breakfast in bed. If a gramophone could be constructed to argue at you with perfect logic on any subject, you'd like that far better. You're just like cats, that rub up against people simply to caress themselves."

"Oh, Philip, you're being rather monstrous about Hugh. To begin with, one must have feelings, to care about Wordsworth, as he does, or pictures."

"It doesn't follow. Goodness! How on earth do you know Hugh 'cares' about pictures? They may just amuse him. It may amuse him to keep abreast of the latest fashion in hideosity. Do you fondly suppose he cares about the London society he keeps? Did you go to his last party, David?—my God, what people! A bald fat man perpetually hissing into insane laughter; a thin man covered with hair, with a voice like the far-off cooing of all the dove-cotes he had just fluttered; acidulated women in all stages of dissolution and disillusion; sibilant young poets as original as sin. . . ."

"It's no good arguing with him, David; for it is, to use his own cry, a matter of feeling whether you regard me as he does or not. I can't prevent him saying that everything I do is done to afford me faint and cynical amusement. If Philip thinks I am a sort of Spinoza finding relaxation in putting coloured flies into the spider-webs of my intellectual attic and roaring with laughter at the result——"

"Yes, that's exactly what I do think. You've discovered that the safe way to be happy is to cultivate a great number of small pleasurable sensations and no real feelings. Four times per diem you have the pleasure of meals (none of my pleasures recur with that frequency and

regularity); you have the perpetual pleasure of being twice as clever as anybody else and twice as efficient; and instead of wearing your heart on your sleeve you have converted it into a serviceable wrist-watch to save you spending one precious instant of your time without getting usurious interest from it in return."

"But it sounds a superb life, Philip. What else ought he to do?"

"He ought to ram it into his long head that people matter more than things."

"I agree I ought, so far as any of those catch-words mean anything. But you, Philip, think that things don't matter at all—except a little literature and a few other kinds of art. It's unwise to lose one's balance about it like that. Some day when one or two of the 'people' you talk so much about happen to have let you down heavily, you'll find the world suddenly empty. But it's no help dragging in 'oughts'. Some things it's clearly sensible to do or not to do, others we have a personal prejudice for or against doing. That's all. I don't in fact regard my friends as chafing-dishes, I like them. But I like them because I like them, not because Philip or whoever it may be has a prejudice in favour of that sort of behaviour. I happen to have an equally strong prejudice against showing one's feelings in public——"

"Or being carried away by them at all, Hugh. You must grant Philip that."

"Yes, I don't share the romantic love you and

Philip have in your different ways for being miserable, in order to be passionate. Any more than I share your Socialist aspirations towards a Utopia where every one will have exactly sixpence. You are always longing to do something, Philip, for something to happen; you won't recognize that generally there is nothing to be done. You can't for the life of you let things alone."

"It's all right; you needn't talk as if David were on my side. He always takes yours the moment you appear. And I don't know why you talk, either, as if he were a person of such overflowing affections—David, a misanthrope who knows six people in the world and cuts the men on his own staircase. He likes you and his uncle, because he never knows what you will say next and his uncle is a cynical antique. Now you can amuse yourselves for the rest of the evening dissecting me—for I must go. It's always like this with the pair of you: I fling my dagger, like Burke, on the floor of the House—and you, like Sheridan, cynically inquire, 'Where's the fork?'" And half-angry, half-laughing, he was gone.

I took Philip at his word and told Hugh of the historic evening with his mother at Wineaster. "It was really a most extraordinary experience. She was the oddest mixture of she-bearishness and detachment about Philip; and of shrewdness and crackedness about things in general. Of course she was grotesque about pairing him off with some nice young thing-cum-housekeeper."

" I'm not so sure. She may have been right to some extent."

" Really, Hugh——!"

" Well, I can't help it if she was. I promised to co-operate—one had to say ' Yes '. Nothing could be less likely to happen to Philip for all that."

" It's not likely, certainly, that you'll be much help. You'd never think flesh-and-blood good enough for him."

" Wouldn't it be more use really, if you could help me persuade Philip to go and live in London and earn the balance of his living, instead of stagnating at Wineaster? I don't believe in backwater-lilies. It might be harder to write in London because of distractions; but I'd rather Philip never wrote a word than was miserable."

" I suppose all this means that you've decided definitely for journalism against Cambridge and teaching? "

" Yes, in the last month—but how on earth did you know? "

" You're charmingly simple, David. You think Philip will find Jacob's Ladder between Heaven and Charing Cross because he will be living in an attic thereabouts with you to point it out."

" Devil! "

" It wouldn't do, David. You weren't born to do Festing Jones to Philip's Butler. Incompatibility—you won't believe me—yet awhile. Philip, whether he's artistic in any other way or

not, has an 'artistic temperament'. When you're unreasonable it's because you can't help it; but when Philip is, it's because he won't help it."

"And is that necessarily fatal?"

"That and all the other things that go with it. . . . Philip is very nice, but he'd be a vampire for you to live with. He'll have to have a victim, or several, to suck the vitality out of. Mrs. Winton has pensioned herself off, long ago; consequently now she has asked you to look out for a virgin martyr."

"You're very exaggerated, Hugh, and rather horrid. I'm not going to look for one, anyway."

"Of course you think I'm exaggerated; it wouldn't need saying, if you could see it for yourself. I don't mean that the martyr will necessarily suffer martyrdom. A clever woman would give Philip the right mixture of firmness and indulgence. But only a woman. Oh, I know, if you weren't shy, you'd be quoting, 'passing the love of women'. Dear dictionary! It won't do in this case, and it's time you began to see it."

. . . . . .

Is he right? I see now all he meant—writing things down makes them clearer. But somehow it would seem such a "great refusal" to give in and admit it all. My castle in the air, my London attic, built so secretly—unmasked like this and shaken to its poor crazy foundations! Only Hugh could have done it. I feel tired and almost middle-aged.

March 10*th*.

This *has* done it. Poor spasmodic diary, scapegoat of my black days and receptacle of my blue devils. Uncomplaining confidant of all the peevish lamentations I daren't inflict even on my friends. I've almost always made a point of expecting to be disappointed; perhaps I didn't depress myself enough beforehand over this Fellowship business—with only four candidates for two places, and a fond illusion that I was not myself completely half-witted, I felt too safe. And now the rest of my cloud-castle comes clattering about my ears; the bricks at least seem real and hard enough. No London with Philip for certain now—another year toiling at some other damnable piece of research into what isn't worth knowing—the refuse-heap of ten generations of pedants who have rootled all over the stubble-field of Classical Scholarship. I suppose I really must try again—or dare I trust to journalism alone to make up, with what I have, the necessary livelihood? It might mean sponging on my uncle—or a risk of sticking in Grub Street for ever and ever—no! But, all the same, I shall never, never make a scholar.

So many things, valued in terms of the life they cost, aren't worth while. Browning's Grammarian—the slut! Sappho appreciated through horn-spectacles! Only imagine the obscenity (unprintable in any but learned works) of Catullus on being introduced to his eunuch commentators.

I never descend into the mouldier corners of the University Library but I remember among its shadows the eternity of morning sunshine on hill and wood and meadow and sea, that men have squandered out of their brief pittance, just to fill a few inches more of cracked calf-skin. It passes the time, I suppose. That's its chief use; learning saves men thinking; it does not cheer, but it does inebriate. Dear Johnson, you at least by some miracle survived even your Dictionary, and proceeded in old age to live, and never forgot the meanness of the pedant's life.

What sour grapes—for shame! "Les honnêtes gens ne boudent jamais." Not at all the little gentleman! Yet I shouldn't have minded so much if Philip had seemed to mind a little more about it, and less about some miserable book he had lent me and I had lost. My intelligence knows that he was only like that because yesterday was one of his black days; but the rest of me resents it and jibs at excuses. After all I never treat him like that.

It seemed all the worse because the Dodgsons were so charming to me about it at dinner tonight, when he, if not she, might very well have been bored at a favoured pupil like me making such a poop of himself. True, his methods of consolation were peculiar—hopping on and off the fender and ruffling his white hair backwards like an exuberant cockatoo and screaming with laughter twice as loudly as usual; but they proved rather effective. Learning sits lightly upon him

at all events. And then it makes rather a difference that his wife is one of the half-dozen intelligent women in Cambridge. Odd couple; with her short boyish hair she is so much the less feminine of the two. Then there was an attractive, sheeny-shiny Girton don—like a Tennysonian dragon-fly—" sapphire-mail " and things. And lastly a much younger sister of Mrs. D.'s, Margaret Osborne; very pleasantly unladylike and fresh from the perpetration of a novel which they say is " oh, quite shocking, my dear." It's good at least to know that such people exist—Mrs. D. is the first real argument for marriage I have come across. Of course Meredith's women are sometimes bearable, can at least think; but then Meredith himself was so horribly backslappish; and his idea of making them witty! . . . their epigrams come rolling out like playful alligators—so biting, and *so* prolonged. I shall go to bed feeling almost urbane after all.

How I ramble! Is it really only a sort of secret soaking—Opium of a Confessions-Eater? It's a relief and I don't propose to start a high moral tone about it; but all the same, æsthetically, I envy the artistic economy with which Hugh moves through life—as for instance when, the other day, I asked him whether he liked Philip's poems and he said " No " in a way which I couldn't reproduce—look and tone and headshake—but which put into one quiet monosyllable all the sentences I suppose I should have taken to express the identical feeling. . . . " Oh, it's difficult when

one likes a person frightfully; and likes and dislikes in poetry are such caprice anyway. I know quite a lot of people think them wonderful; I just don't respond myself." Apple-wife! This *is* rather unfair to yourself. But I wish it were unfairer.

March 11*th*.

Everything goes wrong. Why should Mrs. Winton choose this occasion of all occasions to become maternal and issue an edict that Philip shall go with her to Rome at Easter? Why should Philip choose this occasion of all occasions to be filial and sacrifice our all-but-planned Brittany to the hag? A very little sugar for the pill in the postscript—" Bring your Mr. Halliday." So like her, to expect me to have no plans, no separate existence, of my own ; or else to sacrifice them all at a moment's notice to her " command performances ". Can I let down my uncle and his Breton arrangements—even for a temptation like this? No, it isn't done. The old haven't many pleasures.

Once again, I shouldn't mind quite so much if Philip seemed to mind at all. Damn his philosophicalness! Of course I must needs show this morning that I felt like that—and see, in punishment, that cold darkening pass over his white face; like a sudden gust blackening across the surface of a tarn. Schopenhauer's hedgehogs—for ever running together because they're cold and apart again because they're prickly—how

damnably true it is! Only some hate cold even more than pricks and some the reverse; and that further disagreement makes it all worse still.

And yet, dear unaccountable that he is, to heap coals of fire on my head for thinking him unsympathetic yesterday, by offering a loan of a hundred, if I'd rather start in London straight away instead of grinding another nine months at a thesis! And, dear idiot, to think I could possibly take it! It's him I want. Is it so eccentric to want to know a person perfectly, so that there's never anything between you, never the feeling of groping round in the dark remoteness of unsympathy, with that hateful sense of broken contact, of his having suddenly vanished where I cannot follow? The angry arguing which leaves one feeling distant and bitter, and yet ashamed, and yet unable to repent, is bad enough; but the blank misunderstanding that sometimes comes sweeping in, like a blind choking mist between two hilltops—that's the worst of all.

April 10th. Douarnenez.

Three weeks' peace, retrenchment, and reform; a liberal holiday, in fact. It sounds bitter; but actually I have enjoyed my spell of dutiful nepotism. It would, of course, be a lapse of taste and a contradiction in terms to be enthusiastic about my uncle. For a great part of his charm consists in his total immunity from enthusiasms and fusses. He's like the Fellows' Building in King's, so unpretentiously impressive

and sophisticatedly simple. Rather like Hugh, that sounds; but you feel steel through the velvet sheath of Hugh. Has my uncle thrown away his sword, or did he never wear one? No doubt, it's almost indecent to be so interested in a relative. But he one quarter reconciles me to the prospect of growing old. A young person could not wear his qualities; and yet they are extraordinarily attractive. Of course there is always the gulf fixed between every generation and the next; but he waves so friendlily from the other side, seeing quite as well as you that it exists.

It all struck me particularly to-day, because the subject came up through his seeing Margaret Osborne's new novel on my table and asking what it was like. "On critical principles of 'Tell me who it's by and I'll tell you what it's worth', I ought to know—it's by the sister-in-law of my supervisor at Cambridge. But knowing her really makes it much more difficult to judge (here a glance over the gold spectacles); all the same I think it's extremely good. But then it's very modern."

"And I ancient . . ."

"Not at all. I don't regard you as in the least venerable. But though practically omnivorous, I didn't think you generally included novels by modern young women."

"Oh, I expect I should manage to like them very well—there are so many other things, that's all."

"No, I suppose if one has only reached the

forty-ninth volume of Saint-Simon for the third time and the fifteen-hundredth page of Voltaire's letters for the fourth, it is rather hard to get everything in. What does surprise me—do explain—is that you never do Jeremiah over the degeneracy of modern writing—unlike most people over forty, who want a reason for never reading any of it and an excuse to themselves for not meaning to."

"Really, David, you have rather a low standard of morality, even for the aged."

"But every one tends to get like that. I certainly shall."

"If you were already a journalist, David, I should say that my remedy for the notorious cynicism of the elderly was even more cynicism. After ceasing to be taken in by the present and the future, it remains to cease being taken in by the past either. But as you are not yet a member of your profession and may be supposed to have still some regard for truth, I will own to you that nothing could make me take an interest in many of the works of the young except a base hope that they will continue in return to take some interest in me."

"Well, it's very successful. But I'm interested that you still want so to keep contact with the young, because Philip's mother lives so tenaciously on the opposite theory. She believes in generations keeping to themselves, and her relations with the young are mainly diplomatic. How far she cares for Philip *qua* Philip, how far

she regards him as a person with certain claims on her self-respect, a sort of limited liability, I can't make out. She packed him off at twelve to his public school. ' It's learning for oneself, not the teaching that matters.' And now as much of her life as she can manage, is spent on the Continent, I gather, with bosom enemies of her own age."

" Do you approve of her system? "

" Well, I'd like myself at her age to do as she does, ' mutatis mutandis ', as they say; and I like you to go on doing as you do."

He smiled at that.

" Yes, David, you picture yourself hob-nobbing with Philip Winton for a white-haired Jonathan, I don't doubt. Will it really do, I wonder? "

(How they all go on about that!)

" I don't think so far ahead. Getting old is so awful anyway. But I do know I shall simply hate the younger generation knocking at the door and boring one with their discoveries of what one has known for years, and thinking a new sun has risen to hear them crow. No, I think there's a great deal in keeping to those who are at the same stage as oneself, with the same language, the same prejudices, the same memories. Do you ever wish . . . you'd married? "

" Often—when I indulge in wishing; but then I comfort myself with the reflection that if I had, I might quite well wish I hadn't. And that would be even worse. Besides such wishes at my age, David, in any case, are like teeth—

they have to be stopped or replaced by other, artificial ones. At your age (you see I'm an old gentleman after all) one's indignant with the tragedy of life; at mine one has learnt to make the most of the comic relief. 'What an infamy!' is your feeling about the wrongs of existence; and mine 'What a game!' It's not a very good jest, but God made it—so let it pass. It's less generous than your indignation, but it comes to the same in the end." And then: "As for you, David, with your despairs, you might be a thousand years old; and with your innocence, two. Some people must find you an unbearable young man: don't they?"

But perhaps I ought not to have asked him about marriage; for he was quieter than usual last night. And when we came in from our walk after dinner, just before he went to bed, he said with a seriousness I have seldom seen in him: "If you ever fall in love, David, with a real person, don't be too prudent, too easily daunted into silence by bars of circumstance, too ready to suffer dumbly, too sure it's all no use. A real person can be trusted with the truth."

"But one always thinks whoever one's in love with, reality itself—if that means anything."

"Not always. Part of one knows. And I wasn't speaking generally, but to you."

What was he thinking of? Do I seem so irresolute? Am I in danger of letting all my feelings get used up in being felt? Or does he imagine because I have Margaret Osborne's book on my

table that I'm sentimental about her? How grotesque! But really, I expect, he *was* speaking quite generally; thinking, perhaps, of some experience of his own. How awful to grow old with the feeling of having missed a part of life that nothing can give now, ever! Better suffer than miss the great things in life—but suppose you both suffer and miss?

April 12th. Morgat.

A letter from Philip this morning.

HOTEL CENTRAL,
ROME,
April 6th.

DEAR DAVID,

Your three letters duly came. I should have answered them sooner if I hadn't been depressed; and I should have been less depressed if I hadn't had to answer them. You see I am an intolerable person: but tolerably honest. I like talking and having letters, but writing them—no! What does one say in letters? News? We have been here over a fortnight. I pretend to see sights. My mother has her own devices. She has here, I suppose, about two friends and twenty acquaintances. Home-truths about the acquaintances are pronounced behind their backs, about the friends to their faces—that's the only difference I can discover. "Ordeal by tattle", to the life; only there's no chivalry about it and the long-bow is the main weapon. My mother has evidently decided that I am too anti-feminist. I thought she had despaired of conversion. But when *young* women, even under the proper control of parents, are seen at her tea-parties, I know what to suspect. A certain Miss Goodge provided thirty-six hours' mild excitement. She seemed intelligent but at the same time so afraid of seeming it, for some

reason beyond me, that I lost patience and, with equal mildness, we quarrelled. It wouldn't have done at all, though the union, I feel, could never have been completely in vain which relieved a fellow-creature of such a name. I've tried to write, but it won't come. And so my time is spent between sitting watching people from a café in the Piazza Venezia, strolling alone in the Campagna, and reading Trevelyan's *Garibaldi* and Clough's *Amours de Voyage*. The latter rather amuses me—do you know it? —partly from its appropriateness to circumstances. I made a point of reading out to my mother the more apposite passages, such as:

But for his funeral train which the bridegroom sees in the distance
Would he so joyfully, think you, fall in with the marriage procession?
But for that final discharge, would he dare enlist in that service?
But for that certain release, ever sign to that perilous contract?
But for that exit secure, ever bend to that treacherous doorway?

and

Well, I know after all it's only juxtaposition—
Juxtaposition in short: and what is juxtaposition?

At the latter she smiled grimly; but there has since been a healthy falling-off of juxtapository tea-parties. She asked after you, by the way; and—had you persuaded me to dance? I see you too must have been enlisted in her schemes. I should never forgive your secretiveness, David, if it weren't so amusing as pure art for art's sake. For it's never to the least purpose.

Oh, how sick I am of it! Never, never such a holiday again. Domesticity—if I had any leanings that way, this would cure them. The perpetual petty irritations that one hates, and hates oneself for feeling: the whole nightmare of life that one wants to live and can only read about living. It's like being bedded out in an ant's nest. I wonder each morning how to drag myself up and through

day; and sigh for the régime of du Deffand—two hours eating and twenty-two asleep. I go out most evenings and watch the sun set in the Campagna, casting the long cypress-shadows across the Appian Way; then back and turn into some gaunt, tawdry Roman church with its far candles winking through the dusk—fascinating yet repellent. Here are the ferocity and the spell, the beauty and the loathsomeness of the Middle Ages still unchanged. The hoarse chantings of the Roman ritual come to me then like the shouts of an army exulting in sinister triumph, or the far calling of wild beasts that Aeneas heard round Circe's palace from the midnight sea. I feel the isolation of those who, like us, have flung away these older things as mere meaningless drivelling; and as I listen to the vast vaultings of Diocletian echoing still the Latin of the Rome of Constantine, and think how it will all go on so long after we have ceased, I feel in this darkness a greatness of which our hot, dusty world has lost even the sense. I recoil from it, yet there is to be found there, too, some friendliness of peace. Just to relax and throw up one's tired hands and lose oneself in the calm of some larger thing—Oh I know it's no use. You, David, with your whole-hogging, uncompromising materialism—Hugh with his cold, dry light transfixing all our dreams—you won't understand. I know religion's just dram-drinking; but I can sympathise with these things as neither of you ever can. It's all so human. And the Church does remain the one majestic thing that's left in Rome. The Rome of paganism is disappointing (not a patch, I'm sure, on Athens—we *must* go there some day); and of the modern Rome with its cheap-jack imperialism, the sick wolves and mangy eagle they keep caged on the Capitol are even truer symbols than they were meant to be. But the Papacy has still its dignity; and it's better to be sinister than sordid.

But I don't know why I pour it all out to you. You'll be writing off to Hugh to warn him I must be rescued

from turning Catholic by return of post. You needn't be anxious, there's no danger,—I rather wish there were.
—Yours, PHILIP.

P.S.—Thanks for M. Osborne's book. I've not had time to read it yet. I think I met her once. Ask her to tea next term; it would be something for me to have *some* friends you didn't disapprove of—if not blues, why then blue-stockings.

Poor Philip. And one can do nothing, nothing, nothing. And I do so hate this mystery-mongering side of him, that even sympathy suffers a little. *This* shadow to come between us! For he'll end by believing in some form of It, whatever he says. And the support I would so gladly have tried to give, will come from It instead; and the affection he might have given to at least *some* human being, will go to It instead. It's terrible when people suddenly go religious. Acquaintances may disagree, but not friends, about fundamentals; disagreement about those is a skeleton that rattles at half the conceivable things there are to talk about. Well, I shall see him in ten days.

April 30th. Cambridge.

I had meant to make good resolutions about working more and talking less. If I'm not to throw away a second year on this Fellowship business, I must get something done—even if a thesis on Theocritus (how the idea would have amused him!) irks me as incongruously as spectacles in Arcadia. Yet I only go on dreaming

out of the window. It's a perfect Cambridge evening, soft with the promise of those few weeks when Cambridge becomes not merely habitable, but Paradise. The horse-chestnut leaves on the Backs are just beginning to open—the long buds hanging down like great green locusts with half-unfolded wings, and swaying lazily in the evening air as if they were about to open and fly away. In the western sky over Newnham one star is shining at the corner of a blue opening in the clouds, like the harbour-light of some far haven in the celestial sea. And with it all comes a restlessness that dreams of other things than work.

Philip—the deceiver—has come up smiling with an air that dares me to suggest that there has ever been anything wrong; and at tea here to-day to meet Margaret, he was in the best and most frivolous of humours. The room seems oddly silent, now they've both gone—the tumbled tea-things stare at me with that vacant unfriendliness the remnants of festivity always put on. There's a cold effrontery about the back-tilted kettle, and the cups gape, and the tea-pot wears a sneer.

It was all very pleasant; yet it leaves me a little on edge. For one thing, I rather wanted to say something to Margaret about how much I liked *The Crystal Cabinet*; and with Philip there I somehow couldn't; and he wouldn't go. It's true he was being fearfully amusing about Rome and Anglo-Roman society—But Greek Dialects call me back.

May 10*th.*

The Dodgsons' last night—typical Cambridge party, a dozen shouted *tête-à-tête*, with a 'General Post' every time one is just beginning to get interested and intimate. I always get a headache from the heat and noise and smoke, and falling over stranded coffee-cups, and straining greedy ears in vain for that fascinating snatch of conversation which is always going on two chairs away. But Philip was in his element (being a success and feeling it, the egotist!)—at one end of the room, and Margaret at the other. Still I was touched by the friendly glance and wave I got, as I came in late and looking a little owlish; but we only had about five minutes' talk before she was swept off the rock where we clung, into some fresh whirlpool. Coffee kept me awake till two. "La vie serait supportable sans les plaisirs."

Why are you playing the prevaricating fool like this? I *must* face it. It's like sliding down a smooth snow-slope—imperceptible at first. Then not: with a precipice at the end. But it can't go on. For—bluntly and brutally—I just can't afford to fall in love with Margaret Osborne. I can't afford to think about it at this time of day. And yet what's the use of being pompous? Every word I write only admits what I'm trying to deny.

I shall just have to want. If one is turning into a perfect lunatic asylum, as I appear to be, one can at least pull down the blinds. I must go

through it alone—not drag any one else in. That at all events is clear.

Love—and marriage. The squalid economics of it, the shameless farce of promising a perpetuity of feelings which no one has the power to prolong a day after they have ceased of themselves! And to go on living together without them is even worse—acting a lie in place of uttering one. Conjugate 'love' in the imperative mood! It is the peculiar beauty of the Christian religion, as contrasted with the benighted heathen, to consecrate this cant throughout all its ceremonies and its creeds. "I *will* love"—"thou *shalt* love" . . . How can people have the face to say it? In France they do at least have the honesty to treat marriage as what it really is—a matter of business and social convenience and the rights of property. But what's this to me who have no property and only want to have Margaret Osborne—want to have her, as I feel, for always, but, as I know—till I have fallen out of love with her again. Part of me cries out that such a thing can't happen; but another part knows it's sure. For just as Society from one side sees Love as its mere instrument, so Nature—the procuress!—sees it from the other—Love the tool! Each generation of fools has to be maddened in its turn, lest haply the apostolic succession of folly should vanish from the earth. But the moment that great purpose is assured and the next generation safely started on its same fool's errand, we and our passion are ripe for Nature's rubbish-

heap. "Passez, messieurs." That's the eternal quarrel. All lovers dream that Love is Life's crown and end; they finish by finding that they have been catspaws, and it the merest means. There are sexless forms of life that live for ever; but the wages of Love is Death. The beasts are fooled in their dumbness; it was left for Man to discover that Nature betrays him with a kiss.

But perhaps She over-reached herself when She let us get intelligent enough to see more than one move ahead. Yet of course for the woman marriage seems different. It's more that they have to give—more permanence that they long for. The man can love and leave; but the woman, so often, wants a home—quite apart from children. It might be just an episode for me. But Margaret's three years older; and women age sooner, anyway. With what decency, then, could I possibly try to entangle her affections with myself, who could not marry her for years and could not promise that by that time I should want to marry her, even if I were willing now? That might mean she could never marry—as probably she wants to do. Opportunities aren't so common for women like her, considering the general male prejudice in favour of "little things"—dolls with faces off chocolate-boxes and sawdust at the back of them. Otherwise why was Margaret not married long ago? With all the handicap of being intelligent and unconventional, she is attractive as well—or is that illusion part of my disease? But then I thought the same, when I

first saw that slight figure with the short dancing hair and heard that voice, not soft nor shrill, nor deep and male, but with that firm clearness between—and better than—both.

It's bitter to think how frightfully well we should have got on—with the same view of life, the same scale of values, the same sort of sense of humour. It was so pleasant the other day (after my solitary rides of years round Cambridge, on which Philip, lazy ox, would never come), our last ride together—the peace of Madingley in the fresh of May; the small voices of the children in the village school singing their "Cuckoo Song"; the fields where we trespassed after cowslips; Cambridge looking medieval in the sunset from the hill on the St. Neots road.

The hour became her husband and my bride.

And now another will win her, or she will be left growing old alone like Electra, while I devil in a London office; remembering, or degraded to forget. If only that Fellowship—but if I start on "ifs", I shall go mad. I daren't even tell Philip—it's too dangerous a secret. And somehow it has always been I who was called on to give the sympathy, and I can't suddenly picture the parts reversed. Besides talking about it means thinking about it, and my business is to forget—no, not quite forget the best thing that ever happened to me—but not to remember more than I must, till memory becomes bearable, whenever that may be. "Les nœuds les plus solide-

ment faits se dénouent d'eux-mêmes, parce que la corde s'use—tout s'en va, tout passe, l'eau coule et le cœur oublie."

May 14th.

This talk of forgetting! It's ten times worse than trying to face the thing out. For in place of facing the reality one becomes haunted by a ghost. Her shadow comes between me and the books I read. Through the hideous German of Baumgarten, as in a palimpsest, glimmers her bold, impulsive hand. Is there nothing to be done? Hell would be better than this Purgatory of uncertainty—Oh, don't be histrionic, damn you. Things are bad enough without that. And what do you mean by uncertainty? £150 a year, plus earnings at journalism (and more goose than golden egg there is likely to be about that) —it's absurd. And anyway why discuss a relation like marriage that a few days back you detested on principle? So I do still. Only my principles are weaker than desire; a week has sufficed to reduce me to the merest "honourable intentions"—were honourable intentions only likely to be of the slightest good.

Yet it isn't all quite as half-witted as it sounds. Marriage is to me still a shameful thing in so far as it involves pledges one has no right to give, and keeps shackled together those whom their own hearts have long since put asunder. But with a person like Margaret all that would be understood. We should make no promises; we

should part when either wished. And there is something in that forlorn hope of human beings which strives, however vainly, for permanence, for growing old, since that has to be, side by side. After all how I've longed to keep Philip always; yes, and do you long for it still? No—yes, but in the background, now. That's typical; and ominous enough.

And yet why not tell Margaret all this? That means, in effect—as circumstances are—ask her to be your mistress? Any one less muddle-headed would have arrived at that point without hours and days of tearing hair. And yet could I? Is it moral timidity, the timidity of a conventional upbringing? I don't think it can be only that, it wouldn't stand this strain very long. No, the difficulty is that I'm (*a*) selfish, (*b*) honest. So that I should have to say, "I'm in love with you, Margaret, but I don't want to marry you because (1) I have no money, (2) I cannot pledge my passion for ever." She would probably refuse with contempt and my pride writhes at the thought of that, because I should feel it half deserved. Or she might, conceivably, consent—and then what? In four or five years her chance of marrying will be gone—and very likely she wants children. And then those awful chapters in her book about being unhappily in love, which so clearly go back to something personal. . . . One experience like that is enough—I can't risk giving her a second. I love her because she is so sensitive; and because she is so sensitive, I daren't.

Is this all only my elaborate selfishness, which wants everything for nothing—for love, in fact; which is too cowardly to face the material responsibilities that ten thousand bank-clerks shoulder so light-heartedly, poor fools, every year—and yet masquerades to itself as honesty? No "ordinary" person would give me the benefit of a moment's doubt. Yet it's not quite that. Why don't others have to face this dilemma? Is the rest of the world neatly divided between seducers who just damn all consequences and good young men who take holy matrimony as an axiom? I wish I knew. I wish I knew more of the world and of women. I wish I could think in less of a Bedlamite muddle. Margaret I mustn't tell. Philip, somehow, I can't. So I scribble. "O reeds, be secret; King Midas has the ears of an ass." Ah, more than the ears!

May 15th.

I slept last night—like a log. Thank Heaven (what next shall I be being grateful for?) that Philip hasn't come near me the last three days. He couldn't have helped noticing something, and he'd have begun doing father-confessor; and I should have had to tell. Whereas to-day when he came, the demoniac was sitting clothed and (more or less) in his right mind. Yet why do I shrink from telling him? A little while ago the idea of keeping something from him, like this, would have been horrifying. But now my whole instinct is to lie quiet as the grave; at least till

I've made up my own mind about it. The instinct of the hurt animal to hide its suffering, on pain of being torn in pieces by the rest of the pack? Things are perplexed enough, too, already, without complicating my relations with him. Besides, he was so gay and disinclined to be serious. He would probably have laughed at me; certainly, dissuaded. So I just sat and savoured the irony of the situation—I, his mother's chosen *entremetteur*, thus caught myself, misogyny and all. It is something in life to be able to appreciate its ironies. They hurt just a trifle less.

It's a lovely day. I feel irresponsible. I shall ask Margaret to tea next Thursday—" che sarà, sarà."

May 16th.

I've asked her; but feel much less lighthearted about it. Am I a merely hopeless flibbertigibbet? Damn these endless haverings! Yet as I sit before a comfortable fire with a grey sunset in the west, and a Cambridge east wind blowing, I do feel little inclined to risk my small, snug security, knight-erranting in wildernesses of emotion. Is it, in the end, really worth while? Isn't Hugh after all wiser with the small and certain pleasures of his garden of Epicurus?

> Time turns the old things to derision
> And our loves into corpses or wives,
> And marriage and death and division
> Make barren our lives.

I foresee that if I am to keep any rags of self-

respect I shall have to do away with this diary. I can hardly bear to read the past entries as it is.

May 17th.

To-morrow she comes. You poltroon, of course you must tell her. Damn my pettifogging comforts and securities! I might as well be rotten with middle-age already. First mawkish, then rabbit-witted, without even the sense to remember my uncle's warning (that I thought *such* superfluous advice) about being too prudent and not trusting people—" real persons "—with the truth. Whom should I ever trust, if not her? She will at least understand. She may hate it. I expect she will; but she will at least know what she means to me, I shall have uttered the truth, not swallowed it and choked myself in silence. It is a good world to-day. As I came up K.P., the Senate House looked such a dazzling white in the morning sun against the blue of May, that it might have been for a moment Italy. The world had lost that air of ancient sameness, of no new thing under the sun, of used-up possibilities. Spring was as young, and the future as adventurous, as ever they have been. And the white clouds went sailing, victorious armada, so proudly into the defeated north. Only a few minutes' old, and changing every second, yet the oldest and most immemorial things in all the world. For clouds are really the symbols even more of permanence than of transience. The face of the solid earth changes. Mountains are removed and cast into

the sea. But the clouds still go sailing into infinity, as they sailed on mornings when this was fenland and the otter splashed through the shining reed-beds on the site of Trinity and King's. The fen will come back; but the clouds will never falter upon their way. Our time is so short. Death follows so hard on Love's heels, treading the wings from his feet. Foolish loiterer that I have been!—but to-morrow Margaret comes.

Queen's Road,
May 18th, 1913.

Dear David (I may call you that now, may I?),

I'm most terribly sorry that I failed you at tea to-day. I had been looking forward so to coming. But you really must blame Philip who insisted on taking me to Ely in a hired car, which absolutely refused to move when the time came for us to start back. However he will no doubt have confessed all to you himself by this time. I'm sure you'll forgive him—though whether you'll forgive me, when he tells you another piece of news a day or two older, I feel less sure. I shall so understand your thinking me not good enough for him, and your resenting, in any case, Philip's getting married at all. People always talk so fatalistically of that being the end of real friendships; please don't think me meddlesome if I say I do most earnestly hope for his sake and yours (and my own) that our marriage won't make any difference at all to that. Even this sounds somehow so interloping; forgive me. And will you please say nothing (no doubt Philip will have explained) about our engagement for the present? He insisted (and of course I agreed) that it should be no secret for you.—Yours ever,

Margaret Osborne.

May 20th.

I wish I were dead—that I had never seen this place. Why do I go on? I must get away —London—work—forget; away from the raving misery of being alone in my rooms; or else pretending to them. In a few months I shall be pretending to myself, that it didn't so much matter. But my own ignominious stupidity—that I shall writhe at, twenty years hence. The shame of that will make me go hot and red long after I become able to think calmly of the awful tea-time when she never came—the merciless ticking of the clock—the stronger and stronger certainty that I must at all costs tell her, as the chance of it grew less; or of the far worse evening that followed, when Philip told me all. I've tried not to think of them now. It's no use. I may as well face it. My own fault, my own fault—my hateful egotism, that always makes the worst seem worse. If I hadn't been so full of myself, I should have been less hesitant, less blind to what was going on in front of me. If I weren't so full of myself even now, I should see that all might easily have happened, whatever I had done, and not be so utterly wretched at what *has* happened, seeing that Philip can afford to marry her, as I could not, and the two people I care most for in the world are happy. Will they be?—Oh I have at least the decency to pray for that. In suffering, one realises anew with what a devilish capacity for misery all human

beings are contrived. Having lost all in the wreck, one begins to think how others may have something saved. Strange, how some people's lives seem to be one long unselfishness; and yet one feels that it's all, though most admirable, a second-best. They have really sacrificed a vital part of themselves. But any way such abnegation is beyond me; and what does it matter now? If I could only be rid of this terrible, literal, physical ache across the chest, that I thought was merely a poet's metaphor till now! I must get away. I never want to see Cambridge again—not if they paid me to stay. Thank God, term is nearly done. What a perfect May Week they will have! "Do you dance, Mr. Halliday?"

Only one thing matters—they must never, never know. Did Margaret never suspect? Oh, I hope not. Yet, after all, does it signify very much whether she thought me inferior to Philip, or just never thought of me at all? But he doesn't guess: for this at least I can give myself a poor consolation-prize—that helped by the friendly shadows of the firelight, that evening, I was able to betray nothing of what I felt to the artless Philip pouring out his new-found happiness. I usually dissemble ill enough: but the very violence of that shock, which left the whole of life seeming a farce, made it strangely easy to play a part. I know now that I should go well to the scaffold—that I have a natural gift for the gallows. And, for reward, Philip's comment,

"David—Machiavelli! You're too much for me, I give in. I see the plot it all was, when you introduced me to Margaret. You don't look quite as pleased as I expected. I suppose to you, it was all such a foregone conclusion. Dear David, how good you have been!" Oh, I can't bear it.

August 23rd, Russell Street.

Such excitements as to-day's should, I suppose, be recorded. I have witnessed to the marriage of Philip and Margaret. Now, perhaps, I may be suffered to forget. It's done.

Yet I can still hardly believe that a real thing has happened. So unconvincing—ten minutes in a fly-blown office and behold! two lives tangled inextricably into one. A curiously feeble mumbo-jumbo it seemed, such as could impose on nobody. No relations there, by request. Hugh and I and a jaded registrar in spectacles, worn and weary with conferring untold happiness twenty times a day—Hugh knowing all and feeling, I felt for once, really sorry—and I a witness who could see nothing except, through a mist, a horrible fly on the Register washing its hands with invisible soap, like the soul of Pontius Pilate. In the background the surly roar of London, rolling on and on, to the dawn of nothing; and outside in the square, the dirty yellow leaves that always take me hatefully back to home-comings from summer holidays of childhood to a dank, autumnal suburban garden and days

shadowed with approaching school, so that it used to seem that all pleasure in life was over for next to eternity.

Margaret must have thought my obvious emotion very sentimental—though no more, doubtless, than Philip's due. I shall always smile secretly henceforward at talk of "womanly intuition". How bitter that sounds! As if I regretted and resented her blessed ignorance. Love does make one a mere beast. And at this moment they are driving over the pass and down under the evening star to the lights of Wineaster —to be alone and each other's so long as ever they will. Her beauty his. And yet the stones of Wineaster were dumb with never a warning hint of all this to me, only eight short months ago. I never knew life was quite like this—oh yes, knew without knowing. Two places I little thought I should one day find unbearable— Cambridge, Wineaster. I hope they're happy. It seems the one thing left for hope.

I had dreamed the worst was over with Cambridge left behind. This has brought it all back again. Ought I to have avoided going to-day? No. Pride, oddly enough, seems still worth something in a worthless world. They wanted me; and it would have seemed such cowardice to refuse.

Love, personal relations—am I mad to be obsessed with them, as Hugh thinks? Hugh, brooding dragon-like and far-withdrawn on his lonely, hoarded wisdom. Yet he's not really

inhuman. Does he just strike a wiser balance between people and things than I, who still think people—one's feelings for two or three of them—more important than all the rest of the universe put together? Is he after all right that, where two or three are gathered together, there is the devil in the midst of them? Yes, it's true that I was so happy in the Lakes in January, alone. I should be happier if I followed his example, and I long to be less wretched. Yet I can't change. Hard reality will cure me of this naïve romanticism in the end, no doubt; but nothing else will. Between the two views of life one stands doubting, like Marpessa between Idas and Apollo—human love, so mortal, on the one side; on the other, the eternal things of thought. They too exert their fascination. A mind like Hugh's has its own austere, geometric beauty; the artistry of some subtle, perfectly contrived machine, flinging its noiseless, shining shuttles for ever to and fro. But Hugh's mind is not to be had for the choosing. And even if I could choose it—no, Marpessa would still make the mortal choice. "Love is enough"—or no, alas, it's too much.

Love is enough: ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further; come hither; there have been who have found it,
And these know the House of Fulfilment of Craving;
These know the Cup with the roses around it;
These know the World's wound and the balm that hath bound it:
Cry out—the World heedeth not—"Love, lead us home!"

"There have been who have found it!"—oh may they keep it long!

One grows grateful for the anodyne of poetry. If I could live always in literature, perhaps I, too, might be happy in Hugh's serene Olympian way. But then literature is only alive to those who live outside it too. Words can only be words to those who have not themselves felt and done. One little thing these months have given me, understanding—understanding of those who have written, a thing which matters more than what I once dreamed of so dearly—writing myself. I have grown older: but Sappho is grown new. This has been bitter; but this was Life.

Das weisze Rössl,
Kitzbühl,
Tirol,
Oct. 9th, 1913.

Dear David,

It will be disappointing for you to see the Austrian postmark with only my scrawl on the envelope. But you must blame Philip (as on a previous occasion you may remember, when we let you down at Cambridge), for it is simply his indolence that refuses to write. You may have been able to cope with that quality of his; it's beyond a weak woman. When I suggest that the charming letter we had from you five weeks ago long since deserved an answer, he merely tells me to answer it myself, seeing we are now one flesh and I talk enough for two. And with that he relapses into watching his blue pipe-smoke go curling up between the pine-tops to the bluer sky. But seriously, David, I do want not to lose sight of you: we came to know each other so well in that short term at Cambridge, and though we shan't see much

of you now, I'm afraid, I do think of you as my own friend as well as Philip's. It's hateful to picture you slaving away in an office, while we loiter across Europe. You looked such a tired, disconsolate figure on St. Pancras platform the day we were married—I felt a pang of absolute guilt, as if I had been a Harpy in snatching Philip away from you. When we are back at Wineaster, if you can face December in the Dales, you must come and stay and be made lazy for as long as you can spare or bear.

But you will want news. We left Wineaster (which I loved at sight) early last month, and spent a week in Paris with Philip's mother. I was terrified of the Roman nose, but found moderate favour. There indeed I can't rival you. Mrs. Winton talked a great deal about you, in a rather enigmatic way. "I was wrong," said she, "about Mr. Halliday in my first impression. Doesn't often happen to me. Nice straightforward young person, I thought, but rather innocent and asking for trouble. However, still waters seem to have run deeper than I reckoned. All the same, better, I suspect, at managing other people's affairs than his own." And there was something else about "a fox in lamb's wool"; and when I looked mystified, she went on: "Be sure you repeat it all to Mr. Halliday, or he'll think I'm not sufficiently appreciative." David, do explain this intriguing side of your hidden life.

So that was that; but it was a relief to steam out of the Gare de Lyon. Since then we've idled nearly a month away in Tirol. You mustn't ask what we've seen—it would cause a scandal. We started in the way we should go, at Innsbrück, seeing all the sights like good little tourists. But we felt as incongruous among the sight-seers fluttering their blushing Baedekers, as the bronze King Arthur in the Maximilian Chapel among that worthy's stout German ancestors. So we agreed that "sights" only gave us headaches and just took a slow

train eastwards till we came to a place that looked inviting and was guaranteed by Baedeker free from anything of interest whatever. And here we are. We read and write and walk and argue about Bury's *History of the Freedom of Thought*, which Philip says is unfair to the Church and I no unfairer than it ought to be. So we agree to wish you were here to appeal to, though Philip really has to admit you would be on my side (if with a less feminine logic, perhaps).

Philip sends his love. Don't make engagements for Christmas; we shall expect you at Wineaster.—Yours ever, MARGARET.

This would have hurt badly six weeks ago, with its unconscious irony: now, I'm strangely, unexpectedly hardened. My calm's a surprise and a relief, though not free from a certain sense of shame. It seems a lower level to live on, though a much more comfortable one. However, I cannot afford at this time of day any romantic priggery about the exalted merits of being miserable. It was a good thing I came to London: there have been days almost forgetful, days almost enjoyed. And, bitter as it is, I must try to be thankful to forget.

And yet I write on here. Am glad, as I look back over these sour pages, to have written them. These dead moods and hopes and passions are interesting now. So blind they were then, to the future; so unreal to me they are already, through the thickening mists of the past. They remind me, above all, of how much I have, even so soon, forgotten; how dead and buried my past self is. Death isn't the sudden catastrophe

one thinks; only the crown of a process that goes on all our years. Of whole days, whole weeks that passed over me, no longer ago than last year, not a trace, not a memory remains. I could not name one thought or one emotion that came to me this day six months ago. Out of how many thousands! It is very strange that our past selves grow as utterly dead to us as this, and yet that we are so resigned and indifferent to its happening. Perhaps only the introspective really notice it at all; the rest of the world, unable to analyse their feelings, even while they have them, never notice how impossible it quickly becomes to analyse them once they are past. "Morbid introspection"—the disease of our age, and its greatest quality; so that Hamlet is the first of the moderns. And yet this too has its consolations: there is gain in being the child of one's era, even though a poor one, and at least not born out of due time. Yet I could understand the good extrovert's irritation at this posturing of mine before my mental mirror—like the dislike that filled me once at a certain type of Cambridge youth with their powder and their pocket looking-glasses. It wouldn't move me now. The middle-aged would call it growing tolerant: the young would call it growing middle-aged. It's true I do feel much older—(is that tiresome and affected?)—much nearer my uncle and his point of view. It's all quite superficial as yet, no doubt. But it makes me understand him even better; and it reconciles me more and more to growing an antique.

How good he has been! There are the old who pretend to sympathize, by way of sugaring the pill of soapy platitude they are about to produce as panacea: and there are the old who give sympathy, knowing it is all they can give, all you ask or hope for. Though why it should make one less miserable to make some one else miserable as well, is more than I can say. Partly balm to injured self-importance: but it isn't all so horrible as that—there's the instinct to huddle in the darkness. That's why one so wants love —"être deux côté à côté sur la terre. . . ." Why do I go on in a world which only that camaraderie could make pleasant, and which leaves me such slender hope that I shall find it now? There are so few women who are good and clever and attractive enough to be both mistress and friend together. I never knew but one.

Well, in a hundred years it will be all the same —in fifty, in twenty, probably—

> Us too, when all the fires of Time are cold,
> The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.

WINEASTER,
Dec. 6th, 1913.

DEAR DAVID,

Margaret and I shall expect you, then, on the 23rd for five days, if that is all you can give us. You know enough of Wineaster not to expect news from such a place. I spend my time reading a great deal, more than I once meant to when we were at Cambridge; and write less—only a few poems. Gibbon and Milman's Latin

Christianity and a few more books of that kind take a large slice out of life—(what serious people we have all become, David, and *what* odd lives we lead—or lead us—whither?) But I'm gradually working my way from the classical to the medieval. Half of me dreams of finding an atmosphere, in those ages of less eye-aching enlightenment, in which I may be able to breathe; half of me knows it's no use. And I've said all this before and I know it isn't worth saying. Hugh will be staying here at the same time as you. But I suppose, as time goes on, we shall have to be careful about reunions—they tend with advancing years to become more Death's head than feast, while all the guests grow ghosts. Yes, even the Three Musketeers grew old, even you will, d'Artagnan, even your adored Athos in the Foreign Office. And I, Aramis, feel it already. How stiffly I write to you! And I found a white hair this morning; and the philosophers say time's unreal!

Yet I often feel as if they might be right; as if we might stumble some moment unawares on the secret of controlling our illusion, so that we could recapture the moments among the years when life was good—reverse Time's hour-glass and steal his scythe. After all one can control a little the pace of his passage. That is why I am glad to get back to Wineaster from travelling. The days slip so fast in that bustle: while here you can count, like a miser, grain after grain as it slips from the dark hollow of the future to the dark hollow of the past (though it's an occupation more agreeable in June than this weather). And yet of course one can't go on. After a time the eternal rumble of the flooded Swale gets on my nerves with its inexorableness. In February I shall be ready enough to go south to Italy. Sad stuff, David!—as George III. observed of the writings of William Shakespeare. Margaret should have written, but wouldn't. The local trap will meet you.—Yours, PHILIP.

It's all wrong—this mysticism and misery and Middle Ages. Bored—with Margaret! Am I a romantic simpleton to feel it so strongly? And yet it's only six months that they've been married and even the cynical allow a year or so of Heaven, before Purgatory begins. All "I's" and no "we's". Yet I can imagine Margaret's laughing retort—"What, David, espousing the cause of the unoppressed?" I wonder—do they laugh much at Wineaster?

Don't fuss. We shall see at Christmas. It's precious little I could do anyway, short of doing a very great deal too much. Ought I to be going there even?—there where I swore, not so many months ago, that I could never bear to be again. I must face it. If it's going to start all those horrors afresh . . . not for the world, not for friendship itself! And yet surely I can retain my reason now. It's over and done with, dead and buried—all that side of things. And to see her—both of them—is worth, at worst, a few sleepless nights afterwards. Besides it seems so hard if, because I have lost her love, I must forego her friendship, even,—and give up Philip too. Though (oh to exorcise the prevaricating devil in me!) *that* has ceased to matter so much as once it did. I'm sorry. I can't help it. It isn't all my fault. There's no failure more horrible than lapse of friendship; though I know I exaggerate the weakening of ours, in my terror of pretence.

But of course I shall go. When in doubt, never say "No" to things. Better suffer than

petrify. And anyway, provided neither of them knows or suspects, if I choose to roast myself over a slow fire into a raw old age, that is my own affair.

Besides why should Margaret and I not be friends? Platonicity is a poor thing, granted. Yet even if we were married, our last phase would be just that. Body and soul are more than soul alone; but affection can long outlast desire. Time, that Philip dreads so, that gave her to him, will gradually drag her back from his arm again. And what folly for me to lose her intimacy for the rest of a lifetime, because she hurts, as well as heals, for a few years now! I must simply try to cease this sentiment. I've dallied too long with the relics of passion. Relics!—she might be a mere saint! I have only one, the cowslip she picked in the fields by Grantchester: to-morrow I shall burn it. It's dry enough by now, too dry, fortunately, to writhe and hiss on the coals in that horribly anguished way fresh flowers have . . . like wax images tormented by a witch. Or is this merely being histrionic about nothing? As if it mattered! As if it helped! As if every English meadow in May would not be for ever a memory of her! The mere smell of warm earth after rain brings always one sudden picture back to me. Perhaps when we are both old, I shall be able to tell her at last in innocence how I loved her once; and we shall smile palely over it some sleepy Sunday afternoon beside the fire. "Quand vous serez bien vieille, le soir, à la chandelle."

December 28th. Wineaster.

I can't sleep; the night is too lovely, too full of the longing to be alive. A moon sharp and peaked and cold as a face of death; a low wind; not too many clouds nor too few—a touch of frost—a glimmer of old snow on one far fell-top—and the murmur of the Swale. I cannot, cannot understand why Nature should be so bewitchingly beautiful, as well as so savage, or what conceivable utility could so mould and modify our ancestors that at last to our eyes even the waste wilderness should blossom in beauty as the rose. A cloud soars up from the blackness; kisses the moon's cheek; is transfigured for a moment to unearthly glory, and then fades out into blackness again. Loveliness endlessly born, endlessly lavished away. Nature seems as though a Goddess lay and let light and darkness play through the ages across her ageless beauty, regardless of mankind, waiting only for some loving God, who will never come to claim her, from the darkness beyond the Universe. And we watch it all like mice from the corners, like flies upon the wall—a meaningless multitude. And yet each of us somehow himself creates this beauty that disregards us, between his eyes and the back of his head—that pumpkin, that fantastic, incredible limbeck of dreams that rides on the shoulders of the sons of men. And the strange thing is that dreams are the most lasting things of all about us, the one human thing with a little dole of

permanence. Clouds and men pass away. But the dream of a nameless Greek still haunts the hilltops with its fancy of the silver clouds, as being no other than that fleece of ravishing beauty which Pan spread long ago on the crests of Arcadia to ensnare the cold beauty of the Moon. There is caught the very soul of clouds and moonlight —for a little, till men cease from the earth and the clouds from an airless, blackened sky.

I've been most unexpectedly happy here—such an Eden after months of London. And Margaret looks happy despite my fears. Philip a little silent and aloof. Hugh unchangeable—amusing, amused, impenetrable behind his clever, vivid eyes. Some people's souls live naked in their eyes. One can never convince oneself that those are merely two blobs of jelly, no more an essential part of their personality than great toes are. But his eyes are frosted, not transparent; there's more behind, than in, them. As for Philip, he reads a great deal; is growing a real hermit and misanthrope—so changed from Cambridge. Though I always felt there, that to like some of the people he liked was simply a perverted and disguised form of misanthropy. For they were hardly human. Thank Heaven, I find I can enjoy being with Margaret, without being miserable—so far. She too has become a little inscrutable to me; deeper and quieter than seven months ago. Still in love with Philip, I can see; but they are reserved and restrained enough in public to satisfy Hugh himself.

I wonder in what sort of camp Philip will really end. He seemed so outside us to-day, for instance, in that discussion about children. When Margaret said they did not intend to have any, it was odd to realize by my sudden relief how jealous I should have been of them. Why aren't all lovers more jealous of interloping babies? I suppose it's just our " decadence " that lacks this strange parental instinct. Margaret began it. " Hugh, do you regard us as foolish not to have children? Philip thinks it decadent, though he doesn't want them. But he quotes the Roman Empire gloomily at me; and the *Decline and Fall* sits heavily on his social conscience."

" Though not on yours? "

" Oh, I don't feel at the moment the republic is likely to be much endangered by whatever we do. But I'd like to hear the Government speak."

" It won't say anything in your time, Margaret. You must consult yourselves."

" We do. It isn't as though we felt strongly about it, though. I'd go through it, if Philip were keen; and *vice versa*."

" But neither *is* keen enough? "

" No, I want to write another book; what is much more important, children would probably bore me. They would most likely be as different from us as most of the people we know are from their parents. There are so very few people, too, that one would even choose to have to live with one; and to have people one can't choose, and

of a different generation at that. . . . We are just like any pair of partners working together. And you might as well force all business partners by law to adopt a statutory number of orphans."

"Apart from the question, from *their* point of view, of the extremely uncertain benefit of being born."

"Trust you, David, to administer a pessimistic pat to any discussion—stiffened with quotations from Sophocles or Hardy, as required! The odd pair that you and Philip are, yet really so unlike—you the convinced, but cheerful pessimist, he the unconvinced, yet gloomy one! I expect you're right really; only being, you see, a painfully honest woman, I have to own that if I happened to dote on babies—like my sister at Cambridge—I should let them take their chance and lump it. As my parents let me; and I'm, so far, glad they did. Anyway this is one of your philosophic red herrings, David. I wanted to hear Hugh on population."

She heard him accordingly; I own I thought it all very interesting—what with there not being enough water in England, as it is, for Britons to have each his birthright of a daily bath—only fortunately most of them don't want it; and nineteenth-century Europe having an undeveloped New World to redress its balance—which balance is now getting overdrawn. "You and Philip are merely suiting yourselves; but I believe you represent the beginning of a new social type which

will cease to concern itself with propagation, as the worker-bee did ages ago. Monasticism attempted it, but it tried to repress too many instincts at once, sex as well as parenthood, and got beaten. It is the beginning of a revolution. It will be dangerous; but then after all our descendants are even more likely to perish from being too many than from being too few. And if it has begun at the wrong end of society, from the breeder's point of view—well, it must begin somewhere. Marriage as a business contract between intending parents will remain, as it was invented, for the sake of property; but the fetishes about sexual morality will tend to disappear, as it dawns on people that it is not sexual relations in themselves that are immoral, that is, to say, socially inconvenient, but the uncertain and unprovided births that used to result from them. But of course these are only what Philip calls my inhuman generalities, even if true." But Philip only smiled faintly, gazing into the fire.

WINEASTER,
Feb. 12th, 1914.

DEAR DAVID,

How terrible about your eyes! Aggravating creature to be so laconic! Write, please, at once and tell us what your oculist really says—that is (the main point) how long you ought to rest them before it will be safe for you to start work again. If it is a matter of months, as I expect, I have a serious proposal to make you. You know Philip had set his heart on going to Greece this spring—come with us. And now I'm going to be impertinent—on the question of expenses. You're at

the beginning of your career. Hugh said they had golden opinions of you. But I know (to put it perfectly horribly) that there may not yet be much of the more substantial sort of gold about the *jeunesse dorée* on the staff of a "highbrow" weekly. You must be our guest (I promise you we can afford it—I'm an heiress, you know, passing rich on three hundred a year of my own!). I know you have a foolish terror of obligations. But in friendship the word doesn't exist. So if you are Mary-Annish about it, we shall know you don't really like us, or even give us credit for liking you. We shall start at the end of next month. Philip has taken it for granted you will accept; and you know how that settles things. It will be such a blessing for him, too, to have a Grecian friend as well as a barbarian wife. So come.

Philip's mother has been here a week. She is terribly strong-minded. These periodic overlappings of the inhabitants of Wineaster have to be—from our side, as sacrifices to the gods of the family; from hers, as visits of a Mother Superior on a tour of inspection. They certainly make me feel a novice, with small vocation for housekeeping. But I still give fair satisfaction, on the whole. Philip has developed a new Wanderlust, since her arrival; and so we go to London next week. ("What Cats these women are!") She asked how you were and if you were married. "Nor will," says she. I wish I had half the knowledge of you she parades. Philip emerges from the depths of Baedeker to say he will descend on you at the office on Thursday week. He is better than when you were here. I was a little worried.—Yours ever,

MARGARET.

So Margaret had some money after all. And another of the barriers that then held me back melts into thin air. But I'm hardened by this time to the stabs of Might-have-beens. Just an

extra touch of irony, that's all. Selfish beast—to think first of that!

I shall say " Yes ". What better to be done with three months limited to an hour's reading a day? But of course I can't sponge on them. Fifty pounds saved and twenty-five borrowed from Hugh should cover six weeks' travelling. But why would I rather borrow from Hugh? . . .

My uncle is on my conscience, though. One couldn't help seeing the hidden disappointment to-day when I told him of this. Obviously he had been nursing some hapless little scheme of his own for taking me away. But the poor innocent project died, choked without a murmur. Only the characteristic peer through the gold spectacles. " You're very fond of Margaret Winton, David?"

" Yes, very."

" Not too . . . ?"

" Dear uncle, I've been in love with her for ages. I'm hardened, I promise you, to the microbe by now."

" I sometimes think, David, you're something of a lovable fool. But I don't offer advice. Which doesn't always mean the advice may not be taken."

" But I stayed with them last month and was perfectly happy. I've learnt to be content with very little. Indeed I've grown a very serious and sedate person, you know.

" Serious, yes."

He thinks what he thought, however. Oh, I

can't go over it all again. Wineaster was perfectly all right. And it would be so intolerably hard to refuse this chance. And Philip's so unpractical—I shall be a useful dragoman in a country like Greece. And any way Margaret's fool-proof. It's grotesque to make this song and dance about a perfectly simple situation; and forego the experience of a lifetime, the sight of the country I most want of all to see, merely from a sentimental panic. Avanti!

March 18th. 11 P.M. *Between Paris and Dijon.*

Escaped once more!

I had forgotten there could still be such pleasure in life. I have become again the ridiculous child who loved going to the sea-side because it meant a railway-journey. Though it cannot have been, then, just this joy of feeling that one has given oneself the slip for a moment—escaped from the old round, the old stale repetitions into a new existence, where the rules are new and the limitations draw back a little from the life they were grinding down to dust. Illusion, of course —one of the most classic ones—" caelum, non animum . . ." But one gets to welcome illusions, on the clear understanding one is not going to forget that they *are* illusions—like those charming people of bad character who make often the best of guests, provided one does not forget to keep them on the footing of guests, not friends. And I'm enjoying the here and now, be to-morrow what it will.

Cras vel atra
Nube polum Pater occupato.

Dear Horace! We spend our youth at school being taught by pedagogues to turn your poetry into prose and thinking how extremely trite your wisdom was; and the rest of life learning for ourselves how difficult it is to live up to, and how wise. There are writers one grows to love for themselves, behind their work; so that one grows to love their work too, a little more, even, than it deserves — Chaucer, Morris, Stevenson. And Horace is like that. One has said, could he but have been sure of after-life, he would have hanged himself to see Euripides; you would not say that of Horace, not because he is less lovable, but because he was too sensible; and because Horace knew that after death is only "a dust and a shade".

A jolting of points—it must be Laroche—shakes me back to this strange fragment of existence, the half-light of our carriage with its ghostly swinging shadows, the relaxed, leaning figures of Margaret and Philip opposite. Beneath, the refrain of onward roaring wheels; outside, the dark unfriendliness of night in a strange land. The gallop of the wheels drops into rhythms and begins to chant over and over to itself the thoughts of the drowsing brain. The drone grows hypnotic—one seems to drop out of time into eternity —is not eternity itself, perhaps, like this—an endless onrush through a spaceless, timeless dark? With Margaret opposite, her head a little bowed

and swaying, one slim ankle so close to mine that with sudden jolts they touch, should not such an eternity be heaven? Alas for romance—we know we could not live up even to our own dreams of happiness. The reality of the moment ought to be enough—if not happy now, when shall I be? Certainly I shall never come nearer to Dr. Johnson's curious ideal of driving for ever and ever with a pretty young woman in a post-chaise beside him. And Philip?—I am less happy when I look at him. Part conscience, part sympathy. Yet he's taken much more interest in life since we started; though he's fatter and paler than he used to look, or should. Last night on the boat at Southampton I felt almost close to him again, as we stood alone on deck in the darkness, with the harbour-lights winking before us and sworded Orion astride across our southern path—and remorseful that any mist of blankness had ever come between.

A jarr of brakes—a slow, reluctant grinding to rest—a moment's hydra-hissing from beneath—one, two, three, four eldritch screams of protest from the engine, wavering away into the night of the forest-trees—then the slow, groaning strain of motion once more. Back come journeys of childhood to Switzerland with the parents whose faces I remember far more dimly than this strange, invariable ritual—stop and scream and start again—of night-journeys across Southern France. I shall never solve that ridiculous mystery—whether it is that all French signalmen sleep in

between trains or . . . But I must try to imitate them; I have written too long in this light.

March 20th. Venice.

It began to seem as if we had lapsed into eternity the night before last—I scarcely slept. Yet I am in a mood to enjoy almost anything. And there are such compensations—the first sight of Italy, after the *triste* uplands of Savoy and the squalors of Modane are past, when the peaks of the Mont Cenis pile white above and one sweeps down like an iron torrent into warmth and colour and the South. Or again, under a second dawn, the lagoons and the Venetian Alps, even from a railway-viaduct, leave one reconciled with such a world. I left Margaret and Philip to bask before St. Mark's—even if they didn't hate " sights ", they must want to get rid of me sometimes. And yet Margaret was with me too; I should never have so enjoyed my musty *Calli* and hideous baroque churches, without the feeling that she was there somewhere in the same square mile, to be seen again the same evening. It is strange to me to think of them now, those few walls away—do they lie awake and talk? Even with the married people one knows best, one knows so oddly little what they are like to each other alone. Philip has been almost his old self yesterday and to-day; yet the jesting Philip was never the real Philip, and I cannot imagine him, somehow, laughing with her over the nothings, the intimate nonsense, happy lovers are supposed

to talk. I suppose they do—at least I can imagine —Oh don't, damn you!

Venice is—see Baedeker—almost all I expected. And what more can one say? The moments I shall remember?—Bartolommeo Colleoni; two lines of ragged children, dancing like the two halves of a Greek Chorus by the Ponte dei Pugni, beside San Barnaba, in the light of a lilac sunset; the far sea-glimpse of Torcello; San Michele, the cypress-island of the dead, and Margaret's eyes as she watched Philip gazing at it,—Electra with Orestes, by the tomb.

March 24th. Adriatic.

Even Philip has not found the time pass too quickly these last two days; two days at sea, indeed, give one a terrible taste of aristocratic existence—what Margaret calls "sleeping and eating, with intervals for meals". And the Adriatic, for all the glamour of past weddings with Doges, is a dull enough dowager now. I was reduced to Homer, and to trying the effect of him on Margaret—not with great success. "Not even the parting of Hector and Andromache?" "Yes, David, but even there I can't help feeling that he doesn't seem to feel *enough* about leaving her to go into battle, when he is so sure that, one day at least, he will never return. It's all a little hard." Philip was scandalized. "Oh, can't you see it was just because he minded so, that he had to be restrained, or he could never have endured it at all? But of course translations . . ."

"Philip, darling, I expect you're right. No doubt it's only that a spoilt modern wife has come to expect more than Andromache or Homer's women-hearers could."

A strange relief to watch her smile subdue him. Generous of me?—who am otherwise mad and bad enough to be more than a little jealous of Philip with his own wife. No, not wholly—it's partly due, I fear, to nothing better than an ingrained horror of conjugal disagreements in public. It's such an excellent canon for real life—that Indian dramatic rule which forbids either scratching or kissing before the audience. And yet I wish I knew more what they were like together.

Later I had Philip alone. "I think you were being your over-subtle self, Philip, in defence of Homer. Though, in the face of the common enemy, I didn't say so. But I should have thought that if Hector sounds to modern ears, like Margaret's, too stern, it was simply that his *was* a sterner age. It was natural to lament less, just because life was harder. I don't believe Hector was restraining himself, saying less than he felt; he was just more used to facing death and parting. It doesn't make it any less tragic—though I can understand the feeling of Margaret, who hasn't been bred on Homer like us. But you'll think me too matter-of-fact as usual."

"I do. What a simplified world you live in, David! You're all of a piece. Life is gloomy to you, but never in the least obscure. You're

eighteenth-century. Really, I suppose, you're Greek—though it annoys me to admit that. But it does seem, I give you that, as if the Greeks had, though many Mysteries, little mystery in their life. Homer's philosophy was very like yours—a world, unhappy in the main, but with no riddle, no hidden meaning, no sense of sin. Errors, endless errors, always paid for—pride that is always followed by its fall—but no guilt. Helen's adultery brings more death than a pestilence. Every one sees it, knows it, suffers. But it is only the hard way of the world. The Trojan Elders bless her beauty—and we leave her at the end, waiting comfortably as queen of Sparta to step off into immortality. It's just like your determinism. I should say it was merely your primitive simplicity; only there's the sophisticated eighteenth-century part of your mind as well. You make me see now how appropriate, as well as odd, it was, that Pope of all English poets should have translated Homer."

"Well, I seem in good company. Don't you envy me?"

"Said the fox who had lost his tail. Yes—no. I'm not made like you. Margaret—in a way—is. Only you have trodden the mystery underfoot, whereas she never wrestled with the spirit—she just cut him dead. No religious instinct whatever—as easily imagine Jane Austen going to consult the Witch of Endor."

"While you, Philip, are still beating your brains, as it were, about the arguments for the

existence of witches. It's no good. Witchcraft hasn't been proved or disproved; people just came to think the world didn't work that way and the witches disappeared. So with religion. I wish you'd stop coquetting with it."

"You're so consoling, David. I'm parched in a Sahara, and you demonstrate the utter impossibility of there being any water—all mirage, all mere mirage. In self-preservation I cannot sit down and believe you and give up looking—Oh, sometimes, perhaps, yes—when one's well and happy and it's a fine day. But it's too far between those oases. Do you never wonder, David, about things?"

"Yes, the world is incredibly extraordinary and all that. But I've no instinct for veneration, or for going into ecstasies over my own ignorance of how it all works. Wonder?—yes; but rather at certain things in the Universe, than at It as an ungainly whole."

"No dread, David?"

"Oh, Pascal again—'silence of infinite spaces'. That's mere agoraphobia, Philip."

"You talk as if it were all so simple: as if one could escape the horrors of a situation in the first train that came along."

"No, but under it, if necessary. If it weren't for that emergency exit, I grant you I *should* have the horrors. It always has seemed to me so amazingly foolhardy that we travel through life without the precaution of having a phial of prussic acid handy. The mere thought of some of the

holes one might get into—and how one would curse oneself for not having provided that sure means of escape! "

" Mere claustrophobia, David: though I agree about the prussic acid. But we had much better not argue; we shall never even understand one another."

" But it's so interesting to be clear and not muddled about our disagreement. And anyway it doesn't matter, Philip, if we do disagree——" (and I felt it false, as I said it).

" It does. Sometimes I hate you for making it, if possible, a little harder to believe in anything."

" Believe in people, Philip."

" They die—or forget you—or can't help."

" There's poetry—the refuge, as even Newman admitted, of those who have not the Church to flee to and repose upon. There's something so *lâche* about 'fleeing'; and we shall repose long enough when we are dead. Poetry is so much less fraudulent than philosophies. Both are dreaming, only philosophy pretends not to be: and that only leads to muddle. Poetry is a dream you know you're dreaming. You have it both ways—which is always the great thing in life."

" Poetry in a world without wonder!—an ingenious bombination in a vacuum. No, David, your eighteenth century is an age of prose—and Popes."

" But Greece——"

" Homer had Gods."

" For comic relief."

"All epics have had to have them. They've tried to do without, and failed."

"But life is a drama, Philip—and better without a God in a machine."

"No, an epic-drama. Even though an atheist wrote *The Dynasts*, he found he had to have his Choruses of Spirits and his Immanent Will. . . . And I want more comfort than reading Poetry in an armchair can give, or seeing myself as an actor in a fifth-rate part on the stage of life. I want a different life, not embalming. You promise me I shall perish to music: I'm not a damned swan. As you'd quote:

> What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut
> With diamonds? Or to be shot to death with pearls?

I want something different."

"You must want then, Philip, I suppose. But it's not so much a matter of going to poetry and crying out 'Console me!'—as of being consoled because there's poetry."

"But all your poets are themselves taken up with religion."

"Oh, Philip!"

"But they are. Obsessed with it. Even if they attack it like Euripides or Lucretius or James Thomson or Swinburne—they can't forget it. They attack it on its own stage or with its own imagery or in its own language."

"That's a debating-point, Philip. As you know. Now, there's Morris——"

"Oh, he was doomed to turn up. You and Margaret with your Morris. . . ."

"But he *is* relevant. He was like you in some ways. He had your horror of death. He too was fascinated by the Middle Ages and repelled by ours. Yet I suppose that of all the poets of his century he had the life one would soonest have lived—not stuffy and 'Vic' nor morbid nor fanatic nor frivolous. Such poetry his life is, to the prim or squalid prose of most of their biographies! He escaped your hauntings simply in the beauty of an Earthly Paradise, the best of both worlds, the Medieval and the Greek —but without a word of that other world of yours. And then in later life, more simply yet, in mere courage, the courage of the North. Where his contemporaries grew bleached and yellow with brooding and brain-sickness, he turned to do things with his hands as well, keeping the balance of a saner time. While they were bleating about their souls and their lost faiths, he was preaching Socialism on soap-boxes at street-corners—though he hated it. In the Victorian age he succeeded in leading a fine life without being a prig—as even Arnold sometimes was—and that is an extraordinary achievement. Of course, he died and it ended; so does May. If you only had something to *do*, Philip, that it also kept you physically well to do! Tramps on the high road aren't worried by these things. It's this awful modern division of labour that robs us of the single mind."

"We are all deeply indebted for this instructive and delightful lecture. You've no religion, David; but you were made for a missionary. If I had

your temperament the advice would be excellent—supposing I could swallow so large a dose. Only, you see, if I had your temperament, it wouldn't be needed; and as I haven't, it doesn't help. Your Morris never succeeded in making Rossetti less morbid or happier. They merely quarrelled."

We were silent till Margaret came.

March 27th. Athens.

It has been a breathless time—far too breathless to write. My sillier self feels it almost a treason to Margaret, to have been as thrilled as this by anything else in the world. Still it was so. And it is strange, too, to realise that here was a pleasure that hadn't been, and didn't have to be, paid for with pain—or only with a touch of it. Like Westmoreland, I had so longed to see Greece; and, miraculously, it has proved wonderful even beyond dreams. The touch of pain came, as always when things are lovely, in feeling how unpossessable, even as one looked at it, all the loveliness remained. There it lies; in a few moments one will have gone from it and it will be only a memory; in a few years even the memory will die with its possessor and another generation will be stretching out arms in vain to the same unchanging, unheeding beauty. One wants to seize it, to lay hands on it; but a magic glass lies between; and then, time moves us on. Childish?—of course it is—the old tantalization of the nursery's "No, come along, you mustn't touch". But not therefore less real. And here, where the beauty was

greater than ever before, and the sense of transience stronger, with the thought how friendly and familiar were the figures of the men who had once lived amidst it all, and yet how forgotten by these hills that had been their home,—that feeling of baffled longing came back to me, realler and clearer than ever before. Yet it's a very gentle sadness—Gray's "leucocholy". And the delight that went with it was all the pleasanter because it made me realise once more that in such pleasures lies the disproof, and the only one, of the gloomy doctrine that all pleasure is only the momentary absence of pain. For here at least was something positive, not preceded by a pain of hunger, nor followed by a miserable reaction. It was, indeed, in this respect only like all the pleasures of art; but, to me, more vivid than any of those. I can never forget that first sight in the grey dawn of the grey precipices of Acroceraunia towering sheer above the race of a sullen sea. It was like the imagined savagery of the cliffs of Iceland—the Iceland of Grettir and Gunnar of Lithend—not any Mediterranean land. Here, in real earth and stone, was the Epirus of King Pyrrhus, with mountain-wall huddled on mountain-wall, a tossing world of crags, seeming from seaward too barren for even an eagle's eyrie. Then, looming up to southward, the cloud-wrapped summit of Monte San Salvatore, under whose shadow once the care-free Phaeacians tilled the orchards of Alcinous; that bloom still, whatever else has changed, on the hill-tops of Corfou.

There in Corfou, indeed, the magic breaks for a moment, amid the screaming of extortionate boatmen; dirty alleys swept by little whirling squalls of dust; and the glum British stolidity of barracks our great-grandfathers built. But it is only for a moment, south of Corfou the pageant begins again—Sybota, the two little green islets forgetful of the blood of ancient wars; Paxos and Antipaxos, sharp against the west, where once was heard in the time of Tiberius Caesar, the wailing of the things of sea and forest—"Great Pan is dead"; and on the mainland facing them, that Mavropotamos which once was Acheron, oozing palely seawards through the marshes from its rising in the livid limestone of the Chaonian hills. Then Actium—waste amphitheatre of mountains looking down upon the silent stage where once a world was lost. And last, lurid in the slant westering sun, Sappho's Leucadian headland and Mount Neritos in Ithaca, "Neritos of the tossing leaves", swept for a moment with sun-shot evening storm. And then the next day, utterly different, not less wonderful—the quiet of the long Gulf of Corinth, with mountain-walls slipping past like the dreams that music brings—Parnassus and Helicon, Cyllene and "misty Geraneia". And so in the glow of a second sunset to an Athens pale beneath the violet flush of Hymettus, as on the day they prayed Socrates not yet to touch his hemlock, seeing that his last sunlight lay still across the hills. A land whose story would have consecrated ugliness; whose beauty would have won

it fame, even had its history been dumb—here it waits still but half-travelled, lonely, undeflowered. Oh, it will be vulgarized soon enough; that is begun. But we shall be well dead by then. I wish I might never see a crowd again.

What has it been to *them*? Not quite so much, I think. Of course, one writes things one couldn't dream of saying. But for Margaret the associations are lacking; for Philip, the love of mountain savagery for its own sake. Is there something anti-human in my own love of desolateness? As in that *Schadenfreude* I feel at the thought of the final extinction of the human race; my blessed relief at the idea of the muddled slate at last wiped clean, the infinite fuss ended, the glories and the shames, the Shakespeares and the Tuppers, levelled and alike, as if they had never been—in that first and last real republic, the one and indivisible democracy of death. It's more, I think, than a reaction against the flatulent enthusiasms that forget the eternal insignificance of human life; forget that, in the end, nothing signifies, nothing, nothing, nothing. Is it, perhaps, the dead matter of which one is made trying always to sink back to its old insentience?

> I hear my bones within me say,
> Another night, another day!

April 5th. Athens.

Queer how thinking always leads back, by a hundred different paths, to this melancholy brooding; rest the compass, and the needle, however

it pointed before, settles back to the same dark pole. Moral—always keep it moving; as this week, indeed, we have. It amazes me how much we have seen: Pendeli, with its prospect like Satan's over the Earthly Paradise, from Maenad Cithaeron to the white folds of Dirphys in Euboea, and even the blue peaks of Chios, a hundred miles away; Sunium, with columns that the sea-winds have weathered white as bone; the battlefield of Plataea asleep under the roots of Cithaeron. Always mountains—that is where my dream-pictures of Greece were so wrong, such feeble shadows of the truth. One cannot escape the presence of these warders of the Immortals' land. Through a long day's wandering you are followed by the changeless sight, through air like glass, of their crests of snow; and when they drop at last below the horizon, their place is taken by new watchers, lofty as the old.

We have lived these last days, all three of us, in an intoxication which even weariness hardly sobers. Margaret has forgotten the twentieth century; Philip eternity, and his own indolence. That, I suspect, was always partly boredom—though I suppose the boredom in its turn was mainly lack of vitality. I sometimes wonder, though, if we are not really overtaxing ourselves; if the intoxication is not a little too real and our bodies will not suddenly reach from the over-driving our excitement fails to feel. It is an old story . . . the Northerner coming fresh on the magic of the South, breaking into the vineyard

of Dionysus, becomes filled with a wild, exultant energy that moves to laughter or wonder the softer natives of the land; but it burns too fiercely to burn long; and the fair-haired Achaeans have vanished, and the Normans that reigned in Palermo, and the fair-haired Frankish princes that were Dukes of Athens and lords in the Morea. There comes the touch of cruelty one feels about the South. As I lay in bed last night, I watched a fleckless moon lighting like day the white roofs of Athens and the distant marble of the Acropolis. It seemed a little sinister in the witchcraft of its brilliance,—so different from that gentler moon on the fells of Wineaster three months ago. One's nerves in this bleached modern city with its sharp sun and air and dazzling stone and clanging trams, become tightened up a turn—more sensitive to beauty, and to irritation too. And yet how its beauty covers all!

April 9th.

We have set out to conquer Peloponnesus. I could never have thought Philip so active. Corinth, by train, then Acrocorinth on foot—a whole mountain enlisted as a citadel, with its medieval ramparts still girding the stony summit where Turk grappled with Venetian. There once more, across the Saronic Gulf, our eyes met a far white gleam in the sun, the Acropolis of Athens, as though it followed us still upon our way. And I felt again, as when a week ago I

first saw from the steps of the Parthenon the lion-shoulder of the Acrocorinth so menacingly close across the sea, the terrible insecurity of the life that once was here, when men grew up from childhood and spent all their days with the citadel of their enemies always before their eyes, always looking into the very heart of their own land. That was "living dangerously", after Nietzsche's heart; and I remembered too Johnson's "each of us is at heart ashamed of not having been a soldier". It is, though imbecile, so true. And standing there, the tourist in me, inured to face no worse danger than damp sheets at his inns, turned from the burying-place of those forgotten dead with a sudden sense of shame. We live in this age of ours so for ourselves—what can we do? And yet we too, in place of stock-broking, might have loved an Athens, at the word of a Pericles. No question that *she* was worth while. And if her service was hard—the service of anything worth while is never "perfect freedom"—it was at least simple; as simple as death. Oh I suppose it's largely *Schwärmerei*, sentiment, playing on the emotive element in words; one should slum in Whitechapel doubtless, and improve the poor, if one really has these altruistic stirrings. Only that's so squalid and hopeless. And there I stood on Acrocorinth in that bright, keen air—with a mistress whom I loved but could not serve, who must not know, even, that I asked only to do that; with a friend I feel all day long I am betraying, as I feel (though this is just love's mad,

jealous injustice) that somehow he has betrayed me. His brain wastes, year by year, unused in idleness at Wineaster: mine, misused, in a London office. And even Margaret is a heroine without a stage, without a part. The waste, waste, waste! Oh I know there's crude melodrama only waiting to burst on us, if Philip or Margaret guessed. But better anything, better mere nothingness, than that weary hackneyed triangle inserting itself between us. The angles would be *too* acute and *too* obtuse. So we enter the Earthly Paradise, each with his snake coiled neatly in breast-pocket, next his heart.

April 11*th.*

Mycenae—" The Inn of the Beautiful Helen, wife of Menelaus." I photographed Margaret standing among the blood-red anemones by the Tomb of Clytemnestra—only they'll come out all black, no doubt. The place was a sort of terrible heaven—shatteringly beautiful, and yet . . . Eight eagles we saw circling on the top of Aegiplanctus, where burnt once the beacon for the fall of Troy. Dogs a less romantic feature; perfectly damnable; stones on the whole proved more effective than the dog-whip Philip had grimly bought in Athens.

April 13*th. Andhritsaena.*

Last night in Megalopolis—a filthy travesty of its great name. Disgusting village, disgusting people. Fleas, and worse. And yet only a

patch of squalor on the loveliness. We had even an impromptu chorus of Frogs in the great theatre by the Helisson, ringed with its circle of Arcadian hills—their outline sharp against the evening sky as though bitten with acid into bluest steel. The hills in their silent pride have conquered, and Arcadia has overthrown the streets men tried to build upon her meadow-lands. Megalopolis, the Great City, has become, for ever, a village and a name. Yet what can one do with all this beauty? There was that background in all its silent, waiting glory; and we on the ruined stage stood aimless, silent too—our parts forgotten. Only a little brown owl's hooting from the cypresses, like the insistent promptings of Death behind the scene. Margaret and Philip have grown very silent in the last two days—Philip indeed almost sullen. Is it strain, or jealousy? I would take my dying oath I have given him no cause to suspect; not a moment's. And yet—one cannot absolutely know; and even without cause given, it might happen. Ought I never to have come to be tempted by the devil in this wilderness, where Nature seems crying for ever—"Look, I am so beautiful; and you mortal; and Good—what?" It brings back to me the old English tale of the Passing of Venus, when Christianity came from oversea—how the last two lovers who watched out May-night in the forest met, not dwarf or fay, but the Goddess herself; and heard a voice saying, "Be merry while you can—for I come

no more to these woodlands and never another Maytime comes to you". But here the Goddess of all Loveliness comes still—and comes in vain. Ah, to-day at least I saw her bathing in Alpheios. The mid-day glare of the Karytaena road, and then our plunge in a Greek river that for once would let us swim—Yet I couldn't be content. Surely, surely Nature could have perpetuated the race without making desire so terribly, overmasteringly strong. If I were only an artist, those long arms, white shoulders, slim waist would be mine, at sight, for ever; no need to possess what one could re-create at will. Or is that one more of the pious frauds of life? Why do we so agonize to touch?—the meanest of the senses, that we share with the slimiest things that crawl. I suppose it is because that is the most primitive—goes deepest to the oldest roots of all in us. Nothing is so intense. By it we express intensity. So that we can only utter the violence of the saint's fleshless desire for God by saying he "feels" it. And it's all a delusion, the clutching of a shade; we touch but we cannot hold; we cannot possess and the locked embrace of lovers is but the symbol of Impossibility. Oh, I'm very sagacious; but it doesn't help much. It doesn't weaken love when you've proved it frenzy; nor would I weaken it, if I could.

And it's so difficult. Philip ignores the little things that do matter, the small comforts of Margaret; and I'm afraid to do them in his place.

And the repression maddens. Yet he loves her still, I think, and she, I know, loves him; and I am the snake in their grass. Why can't I pull myself together and be sane, instead of wasting in this criminal folly the few years that one is young?

April 18*th.*

I never understood before, how people could seem to drift so helplessly to obvious disaster. Now I know, having done it. It's utterly horrible. Yet I can't repent. *Si jeunesse savait* —it always seemed so trite and stupid—why shouldn't youth know, with all the experience of others recorded only too fully for its benefit? They never told one the real thing, one's elders and one's books: small matter, however, for it couldn't be learned. Yet they needn't have misled one so utterly, as if when people caused tragedies it was merely because they were too stupid to foresee or else too depraved to care. They might have tried to make one understand a little—though one never would have believed—the terrible, irresistible strength of feelings. One isn't stupid nor wicked, only impotent. It isn't any excuse, really; only the fault is not lack of head or heart, but simply will. Had I only known that better . . . and yet it would all have been the same. I knew somehow, inside, that this sort of thing might quite well result, if I went on the way I had taken, yet I wouldn't know I knew. And so it came. After this time,

short though it is, I can see it calmly. But there must be no more muddle. I must get things clear, while I remember—now.

It was at six on a perfect morning that we left Andhritsaena for Olympia—a long day's journey over mountain-tracks. So there were two mules, for Philip and Margaret; and the agogiat and I on foot. The track was narrow; and we went two and two, Philip and the man in front, and we behind. I was feeling unusually happy, talkative even—it was morning and Arcadia and spring. Even the little tortoises crawling across the path had a comfortable look. And though the country was beautiful, it was a quieter beauty, the oaks of Arcadia changing to the pines of sandy Elis—except for that sudden glory when we burst again upon the Vale of the Alpheios, topped with the snows of Erymanthus and Pholoe. We halted for lunch at noon in a pinewood; and then I noticed that Philip seemed moody, not only towards me, but to Margaret as well; though she seemed to refuse to see it, or to show that she noticed any difference in the atmosphere. She only looked slightly paler than usual, with that set of her chin a little sideways which gives her mouth its occasional touch of stubbornness. But, even so, that look came only at moments; and with that gift she has (like most women, perhaps) of ignoring or at least dissembling heartache, as I seldom can, she talked and laughed and even teased me a good deal. So that in my enjoyment I half forgot to be anxious about any

touch of the sinister among us. In half an hour we started again. The country sank into rolling sandy ridges, almost like England, and whether it was that I was a little tired after seven hours on foot, or Philip goaded on by his irritableness, or the guide worried about reaching the ferry over the Alpheios before darkness fell and the ferryman went home, gradually the two in front tended to draw ahead of us. And being hot and tired, when Philip began to shout back crossly to us to keep up, we answered impatience with impatience, and refused to hurry. The inevitable happened; we came to a fork in the path, with Philip and the guide already out of sight. Taking what we supposed the likelier branch, after half an hour we found it betrayed us, growing fainter and fainter till it failed. We had to turn back; so that when we regained our former track, we were an hour behind. The way seemed endless, far further than I had expected; and the western sun slanted lower and lower in our eyes, as we asked peasant after peasant the distance to Olympia, with always in reply that monotonous "δύο ὥρας"—"two hours", which is invariably the first answer that occurs to the Greek mind. So it was already near sunset when, dusty and thirsty, we reached Krestena, three miles south of the Alpheios. There I had expected to find Philip waiting, and had nerved myself for a storm. But all was quiet in Krestena, the villagers sitting lazily in the setting sun before their doors. Halting for a moment's rest, we stayed our thirst

with some of the wine of Krestena, less poisoned than usual with resin; and with some difficulty understood that a "lord" with agogiat had passed "δύο ὥρας" before. But when they discovered that we proposed to reach Olympia that evening, they grew excited, and protested that we must wait till to-morrow for the ferry, and pass the night there. But Margaret would not hear of it, and Greek rivers had always proved so very unformidable and Greek peasants such liars (clearly they wanted to charge us their own price for a night's lodging), that I agreed to shoulder them aside and push on. If the ferry had really gone, we could ford the river for ourselves. We had been tired and the wine of Krestena was heady; though I think we should have made the same decision in any case. The English are notoriously mad; and so with a shrug the men of Krestena let us go—Margaret's tired beast slipping and stumbling down the stony track to the shore. The last shafts of sunlight were thrusting like a fiery sword up the long Vale of Alpheios into the heart of the Arcadian hills, when we came to the deserted river-bank. Alpheios at last—and half an hour beyond the further bank, Olympia and an angry Philip. For there was not a sign of him here. But the river was more than we had reckoned—no Eurotas, to be crossed, for all its fame, without wetting the knee. Thirty yards wide, the Alpheios came racing, like a torrent, from the hills. And as we stood dismayed, from ten

thousand invisible throats along the twilit shore came the derisive laughter of the innumerable frogs. Still it was too late to turn back and face the smiles of Krestena and, far worse, the teeth in the darkness of its several dozen dogs. So we chose a place where the river was split in two by a sandy shoal. I stripped there in the mud, and, holding up my clothes, struggled through without going deeper than my waist; then back, and dragged over Margaret's jibbing mule with her in the saddle. The worst seemed over—till we tried the second branch. It revealed itself twice as wide, deeper, and more rapid. In three places I came almost at once to a depth in which the current made it impossible to keep a footing. There might be a ford: but we should never find it in the dark. We must turn back, after all. But when we tried to find the point where we had crossed to our islet, we kept blundering into sloughs which gave under my weight and would certainly have bogged the mule. There was nothing for it but to wait till, about midnight, the moon would rise and give us light enough to regain the southern bank. But when I said this to Margaret, who had so far been stoically calm, I realized that there was worse behind.

"Oh, David, but we *must* get across. Philip may do simply anything. You don't understand. It has been our miserable secret. He's madly jealous of you. It's my fault, partly—I happened to defend you when he was critical—tiny things I shouldn't have thought twice about—two or

three times after you stayed at Wineaster. It was so little to begin with. Then again when we started for Greece. I ought to have seen sooner. The last week has been awful. At first I laughed—then pleaded. Then it seemed too fantastic—such pedantry. I thought I must make a stand for my friendships. You know how I've always stood out for friendship without a thought of sex. Was it all to be sacrificed to this miserable lack of trust? Oh I can't tell you here. The nights we've wrangled, sleepless, since we started. Philip owned he had no real grounds—that he liked you far better than any one else except. . . . But why had I brought you? How could he feel me his, when another mattered to me so much? You were more attractive, and thought so much of me. . . . Wasn't I slightly emotional about you?

" Oh it grew beyond reason, beyond bearing. And this morning I set my jaw. I kept with you. Yes, I kept behind on purpose. Philip must learn. And now—don't you see, nothing —nothing will convince him I didn't mean this? Oh why didn't he wait? God knows what he may do alone there all night."

I felt strangely cold and indifferent about Philip's jealousy—I who had been feeling so guilty in the days before. I only knew that Margaret was there before me, in misery—the one misery I could not bear. And in the same flash I saw the escape, the chance, after months of brooding and refraining and all the strain of

endless repression, to act at last. I could speak, yet earn forgiveness; sin, yet in the same instant atone. Alpheios should mend or end it all. "Margaret, don't! I'll get to him. It shall be all right again between you. Even though Philip is right and you have been the only thing I've lived for since we met each other. I ought never to have come to Greece: now I pay my share. But at least you know."

A moment later, with Margaret's voice in the darkness wildly calling my name, I was being swept like driftwood down Alpheios. No great swimmer, I had no great expectation of reaching the other side. I felt only a mixture of wild excitement and yet of calm. It all seemed so unreal, so fantastic—suddenly to die like this. Yet my body shrank from the chill of the river and of death; and its frantic struggles to keep swimming seemed almost the agonies of some dumb animal, not part of me; for in my mind lay, behind all else, the calm of feeling that, whatever the end, I had spoken out and Margaret knew. The fretting gnawing anguish was over at last. Love and friendship seemed reconciled in the end. And all the time instinctively I struggled to keep swimming in a direction half-upstream. I could see the dark curtain of pine-clad hills along the bank driving dimly past. A little promontory thrust out a sudden arm to catch me. But just as it seemed I should drive full on it, the turning river sucked me sideways and I was round the bend. It began to feel like the finish.

My heart was pounding like a hammer in my ears. Yet I could think "It's probably better so—and a clean way." I could feel that I had scraped a leg and it was bleeding, and reflect how odd it was that in a few moments what had run so hotly through my heart these many years, would suddenly hesitate and be still. I had reached indeed that state of half-consciousness in which one can no longer see, but only hear, when something hit at me out of the darkness, and I found myself clutching and clutched by the branches of a fallen tree. There I hung gasping and slowly getting back my breath; and across my incongruous pedant's brain there shot even in that instant a vision from my days at school, of Homer's dripping Odysseus hanging grotesquely, "like a bat," from the fig-tree above the Hell-mouth of Charybdis. And with that incongruous thought, the thought of its incongruity . . . the sense how happy life sometimes used to be . . . how absurd to think I had all but died, like a summer spider in the bath at home . . . so unreal—and here was I thinking so realistically . . . and then through my thoughts, like a red thread, the sudden fear again—I should die yet, unless I did something quickly. Shivering and slipping I dragged myself astride the swaying trunk and, sitting so, began to work myself ashore.

The rest of that night I do not care to remember. The cold was terrible—so terrible that as I stamped feebly up and down between

the river and the thickets impenetrable in the darkness, it was only at moments that I could think of the hideous tangle that had involved our lives, of Margaret, frozen, alone on her sand-bank with the thought of me dead, of Philip—Philip, too, perhaps pacing up and down somewhere in the night, wrestling with the bitter agony of the betrayed. I had betrayed him; I had spoken what could never be unsaid; I was unrepentant, glad, and yet terribly ashamed. And yet, again, what harm was really done? How tiny a crumb of comfort had I snatched from Philip's feast! He had her always; I should pass into and out of her life a few days in every year, a stranger and a sojourner. And what could my moment's treason matter with a loyalty like Margaret's? That was the sensible attitude; and round me came unceasingly through the darkness the obscene laughter of the frogs.

So at last as I shivered and caressed my ruffled conscience and cursed the dragging hours, slowly the east grew grey and a red fissure scarred the clouds above the Arcadian hills and the mocking of the frogs died into the stillness of the dawn. No cockcrow broke it; no breath of wind; only the swirl of Alpheios hastening to the Ionian Sea. And before I plunged into the woods to struggle back the three-quarters of a mile I had been swept the night before, I could not help turning for a last look—to breathe the peace of that Olympian dawn—its virginal, queenly indifference to all that for three or thirty thousand years had been

done and suffered here, in the light of one more new risen sun. I remember that peace now with a surpassing clearness; for I wish I could feel some touch of it again.

Even in daylight the three-quarters of a mile I had been carried downstream took me thirty minutes' clambering, before I came near enough to hail that tired, cold figure pacing up and down the sandbank; at the sound of my voice it started as if shot. Against the shore on my side the ferry-boat lay bumping lazily, and with the help of two peasants who arrived on their way to Krestena, Margaret and her mule were brought across. That drawn deathly face with the great rings about the eyes—it haunts me still. "Oh, David, alive, alive, alive!" I perched her on the tired beast, and we crept off together up the hill-path to Olympia. It is not far really; but the way seemed endless till we staggered down the last slope into that scattered group of incongruous hotels. Margaret was ready to faint for want of food; the search for Philip must wait. After half an hour's delay we sat huddled over a Greek hotel breakfast. The sun was already warm where we sat outside, and Margaret was beginning to look like a living person once more, when suddenly I saw her features tighten and, from behind, a shadow fell across the table. I turned and there stood Philip, pale and motionless, with his eyes narrowed to slits in that odd, intense scrutiny I had grown to know in old days, when he was angry, and to hate as something sinister. He

looked not at me, but at Margaret; worn out already, without this, she lay back in her chair and shut her eyes. The silence was terrible; it seemed as if it would have no end. Yet I felt I could not come between them now. I had come too much between. And how should I begin? Then, without a word, Philip turned and walked away. Misunderstanding all, assuming all—for him too there was nothing to be said. And in that silence I suddenly saw yawning between the two people closest to me in the world—two who a day since had seemed fundamentally indivisible, to be put asunder by none and never, I had sworn, by me—a gulf I could hardly believe real, yet ready to swallow both their lives. It was grotesque that he should drag into actual existence a whole imaginary tragedy, that he should have so little faith in us as this—yes, Philip to the life, never giving you credit for a dog's loyalty. (With a clearer conscience, maybe, I should have felt less rage.) But anger blinded me then and I called after him: "Philip, don't be a histrionic fool. Think less of your damned self and a little more of Margaret, we shall have her ill on our hands, if you——" At that he turned suddenly upon me and with his dog-whip slashed me across the face. Instinctively, in the first horror of it I looked back for Margaret. She had sprung to her feet behind me, her face whiter still with anger, while in the background, ridiculous Chorus, stood the agogiat and two beggars, open-mouthed. Thinking quietly of it now, I recog-

nize her look for a thing I have seen once or twice before in women—that sudden glare of tigress protectiveness, springing from depths older than mankind, beside whose lightning intensity men's mere righteous indignation moves so slow. Before that pale, furious face Philip turned and slowly went indoors.

Moving as in a dream, that seemed too horrible to be anything but a dream, I coaxed and pushed Margaret to bed—better wait, it was impossible to have it all out now, better wait . . . till she had a little strength and Philip had come back to his senses. By the time I had washed the blood from my face and changed my wet clothes, and pondered and pondered what would be the best means of convincing Philip, and made the hotel-keeper understand that I wanted to find his room, it was too late. ὁ κύριος had just paid and left by the daily train to Pyrgos.

For three days I had other things to think of. That fever of Margaret's, following on an April night in the middle of a river, turned out much slighter than it might have been, but enough to worry me badly in the comforts of a Greek inn. All that I could do was to write a long letter of explanation to Philip, addressed to our Athens hotel. This morning came the answer:

ATHENS,
16.4.14.

You waste your time insulting me with excuses, that cannot matter to me, whether true or false. You utter little fool, what do you suppose I care whether you slept

together or apart in the bed of the Alpheus? You make me sick with physical affidavits out of a French novel. You are in love with Margaret. You were, I see now, already in love with her, when you accepted my invitation to come to Greece, with what may, for aught I care, have been cleverly studied hesitation or the last waverings of loyalty. I suppose you imagined, if you used your imagination on any other subject but yourself, that I was prepared to share Margaret's love with you as I have shared everything else. Oh, quite Platonically, be it understood: you were always such an idealist. Perhaps, even, being more fool and less knave, you thought I need never know and never mind—that you could spend two months, night and day, alone with the two of us and in love with one, without betraying yourself as well as me. But why debate about it? Words will never undo what you have done. There are things—can't you see?—that no one shares, one room in my life where three could not be. One would think to hear you that physical intimacy was all that mattered, that only the body could be violated. Thanks to your folly and worse than folly, Margaret owned to me that night at Andhritsaena that she loved you, claimed her right to care for you as well—*en secondes noces*, let us say. More for me, of course, more for me. That was consoling. Some can share, they say: but I am not one of those catholic lovers, I will have no *cavaliers serventes*, no loves of the triangles. I did not love easily; I cared for no other woman, never. With Margaret I never dreamed I should need to. And I can't. For a year she made me happy, as you never did, as I had never been. I suppose because we did not paw in public, and because it suited you admirably to think it, you thought I did not greatly care. So you have played with fire and burnt my house about me. The risks seemed small? They always do. I was never the one of us who prated about friendship: but I should never have dreamed that anyone who had ever heard of

loyalty could have risked so light-heartedly more than the life of an acquaintance, even; I will not say, a friend. But why should I explain why I hate you, why I slashed you across the face? Because I hope it may hurt even you a little to hear. Had you ever known jealousy, been made to live with it, to lie sleepless with it, to feel it waking with you as you woke, you might understand, with less injured innocence, how I was goaded to a blow which—not for your sake—I wish I had not given. But after weeks of smiling back at you, bland little undermining mole—of jealousy, jealousy, jealousy suppressed and stifled for both your sakes—to be accused of "thinking only of my damned self"! I thought only too little, I compromised too long, I sacrificed too much. And now that's over. Better than sitting in front of a dying fire, with your ghost leering eternally between us, while we discuss the weather at Wineaster. Do not let me ever see or hear of you again. It is finished. PHILIP.

It's terrible. O Philip, Philip. It's true, it's just, yet so unfair. I can see your side, I did see it, though not as much as I ought; but you'll never see mine. If you had only trusted me a little more than I deserved, instead of a little less. Oh, the muddle of human nature, neither one thing nor the other, wanting always to have things both ways, hoping against hope that it can—I can't bear to think about it—some day when it's too late, we shall see clearly and writhe with the futile knowledge that will never help us then. Each time I read it, the whole thing seems like a ghastly play. Yes, this is how we play when we grow up. This is what we grow up for. Years of discretion. . . . Is this what other people's lives are really like? Behind the comfortable

masks, the fish-faces that pass and pass in the street, has this sort of thing been? Is it going on everywhere? Hidden, censored—it too passes, we forget, and the wheel learns to keep the rut and bear its burden. They never told us, our elders, that this was the sort of horror we were growing up to endure; they had forgotten, or could not bear to; and if an angel from heaven had told us, we should not have believed. In a year's time we shall not believe it ourselves—until it happens again. . . .

> Larmes du cœur par le cœur dévorées,
> Et que les yeux qui les avaient pleurées
> Ne reconnaîtront plus demain.

So the conspiracy of silence goes on, that life may go on too. The skeleton to the cupboard and man to his labour. Until the night. Our tears wet the grindstone and the steel is sharpened for some other's flesh. Utopias—they invent them so glibly and bow us in to their White Cities, provided against everything except this—their little Hells all heated with electricity. I can only think of one real Utopia—where all the inhabitants would disappear at fourteen into the mercy of death, excepting a few Guardians condemned by lot to live through middle-age and child-bearing, so that the happy nursery might go laughing on. No progress, no barren virtues; only the happy growth and promise of eternal youth, only the illusions never to be broken, only the dreams of the fairy-tale, the childish Loves that have no kinship with that saddened elder

Eros whom men carved long ago from these marble hills, and about whose heart have grown, like the strangling stems of some beautiful poison-plant, passion and jealousy and desire. There children, who have the power to be happy, could be suffered to be so, not enslaved in the service of their own joyless adult years. It would be a happier Utopia than any yet devised; and it's so impossible, it's quite safe to believe in. Only the impossible is sure.

To Margaret nothing yet. She is better to-day, though torn in two with anxiety. We haven't dared talk; but we must. All depends on her. In all this misery my one rock has seemed my love for her—and yet that is the stone of offence itself.

April 19*th*.

Last night Margaret was well enough to go out. We sat in the quiet evening sun among the ruins of the Altis, a little wind swaying the pine-trees on the sandy Hill of Kronos. I showed Philip's letter; and after she had recovered from that a little, told her about the past—reticence seemed futile now—the first meeting at Cambridge, my tormented indecision, the " too late! " that ended all. She sat incredibly still through it—the pale face resting on both hands, the dark hair stirring a little in the wind. And when I had ceased, there among the tumbled fragments of the dead whose race was so long since run to the rest beyond the final goal, the silence seemed

to go flowing on in one clear stream that swept straight like riverweed in its current the tangle of our lives. What we had done, we had done; past and future seemed a dream. What Margaret felt now, I did not know; the next moment would unfold it; but it was with no haste that I waited for the silence to end. At last it came with that quiet, unfeminine decisiveness of hers: "It's rather ridiculous how I'm torn with the decision, as if it were mine still to make and Philip had not made it for me—and being Philip, will not alter. I loved him, David, and wanted to love him, and no one else—I didn't want the string of lovers it's the fashion nowadays to want. There was you—Philip's other half when I first knew you, and the means of bringing us together—but that seemed different. I felt for you an affection that gradually became so strong that, hard-pressed, with my excessive frankness, I owned it to be emotional—a kind of love. I didn't guess how you felt, except for an early suspicion at Cambridge, dismissed when nothing came of it; much the same feeling as mine perhaps, I thought—an affection, self-sufficing as it was—not asking nor hoping to be more. I should have tried to stop seeing you, if I had thought my feeling for Philip in danger. But I didn't think so and you gave me some things he didn't; for though we were fundamentally happy together, we didn't always succeed in sympathy. He became suspicious—so naturally. Then we argued and hurt one another. That day on the way here I was doing

a declaration of reasonable independence—I could be trusted, but he must trust me. Oh, the misunderstanding folly of it!—yet we all meant so little harm. It's my fault really—I knew what he was feeling like, the violence underneath—my fault, and luck's, that makes things happen so. Only that blow I do not think I shall ever forgive. In that moment my love for him seemed to die, like a child inside me. Those horrible instants when a face you know far better than your own seems to change to the mask of a strange person. No, I do still love him, with a bitterness; but it's finished.

"You want me, David, still? You aren't repelled because I sit here turning over the bones of the past, doing a post-mortem, instead of falling into your arms? No, you'll understand—everything—except how much you have come in these five days to mean to me. I can't make love to you, David. The words would all have echoes—but it isn't that I don't feel with an intensity that even adds a little to the general ashamedness that troubles me—for both of us. For you oughtn't to have come to Greece, David; we are both to blame. God knows, some day looking back you may feel I turned to you not too slowly, but too quickly for honesty and respect. Something in me feels it now, but I love you enough to be blind to that."

. . . . . .

I am happy, at last, despite anxiety, and remorse, and shame that I have the heart to be happy at all; but with a sense, too, that I must snatch

the moment because it is so brief and will never come again. The beating of Margaret's heart against mine is louder than conscience—a conscience that is half deadened by a feeling of the fatality of it all, that things have happened so and must and will—Mark and Tristram, Arthur and Lancelot, Gawain and Pelleas, even poor John Ruskin and Millais. Yes, it is easy to be philosophic when your foot is on the other's neck. The reckoning will come, I suppose. But I shall have lived.

April 21*st.*

Yesterday afternoon in the hotel at Olympia an old *Nouvelles d'Athènes*, and at the bottom of the back page this—

"A Phaléron pendant la nuit d'avant-hier une tragédie en train d'arriver a été heureusement empêchée. A minuit environ, un ombre qui errait sur le plage, excita l'attention de M. Arbanitopoulos, résident à Nouveau Phaléron. L'ayant suivi quelque distance, il vit l'inconnu tout à coup se précipiter d'une jétée dans la mer. Les cris vigoureux de M. Arbanitopoulos attirèrent aussitôt du secours, et l'étranger fut retiré de l'eau avec quelque difficulté et ranimé par la respiration artificielle. Sa tenue est restée jusqu'à présent très distraite, et il s'est obstiné à ne donner aucune réponse aux interrogations de la police. De ses papiers, cependant, il paraît qu'il soit un anglais qui s'appelle Vinton. On l'a détenu."

. . . . . .

Yes, I thought so—our spell in Arcadia was not to be for long; though a little longer than this it might have been. It would have had to come sooner or later—the day when Margaret's health ceased to be an excuse for lingering at Olympia and we had to face the world. Yet it might have been longer. It was only human that I hesitated, while Margaret lay sleeping through the afternoon upstairs, whether this too must be thrust on her. How easy not to have seen that brief paragraph—and how ignoble in love's selfishness one grows!

I scribble on my knee as the Athens train winds in and out of the tunnels of Achaea—the great mountains of Phocis and Aetolia across the Gulf slipping unchanged before us, as we saw them from the steamer those few weeks since, before it had happened, before it was even conceivable. I am growing used to earthquakes, and like some citizen of Revolutions accustomed to waking up and finding the world has changed in the night. I dread to-morrow—perhaps an Athenian law-court, anyway Philip—and in the suspense it calms me a little to write. Nothing would have calmed me a week ago before such a prospect. Now I feel not very sad nor very glad; excited, remorseful, passionately in love, fatalistic, perplexed with myself for not being horrified, only frightfully sorry about Philip. The past has set its sanction on Margaret's love and mine, that seal which God Himself cannot break nor undo. It was to be; and it has been.

Have I grown suddenly hard? Yet I am jealous too and afraid; jealous of him—poor devil, how he has suffered!—afraid of Margaret finding, despite foul blows, that old ties are stronger after all. I tell her.

"Oh, David, don't miscall yourself mean for being obsessed with these things—you are far better than your thoughts. And don't idealize me. I should like to think I was acting from the highest motives in hurrying from Arcadia to an Athenian law-court—where they'll leer at us and write innuendoes in their horrible papers. It is partly because I care about Philip still, because I have memories; but it is, too, because I'm a rather proud person and feel, like you, that there are things one simply doesn't do—and letting down Philip would be one of them."

"But you talk as if you were ashamed of being proud. It's on that particular deadly sin that my few virtues are based."

"Yes, David, but are you particularly proud of the fact? Don't you feel sometimes—I do—that it's also a little ridiculous? Haven't you secretly more real respect for the people who are nice from pure niceness, without thinking why? Like the 'wicked lower classes', very often. Don't you want to laugh sometimes at the heavy creaking of our own moral machinery?"

"Not at yours, Margaret—I never hear it. Though doubtless you're all the more lovable because you do."

. . . . . .

But I'm afraid of him still. I think of the end of *Candida*. Supposing it should seem that Philip is even less able than I to live without her? Why did we come away from Olympia? We should have been wired for, in the end, I suppose, and it's better to go than be dragged. Yet we might have had two or three days more. Nothing so selfless as love, nothing so selfish. I can't help wishing Margaret would forget him a little more of the time; yet I should love her the less if she did. I want to live in the moment, and I can't. Hypocritical tags of "The Last Ride Together" run in my head and madden me. The thought of separation, after all that's happened, cuts me in two. I could pray for the train to plunge over the embankment into the quiet Gulf below. Yet—(if I could only feel it meant anything!)—the past will always be there, always in my heart, while I am I—for a moment, Margaret will have belonged to me.

The train lingers and loiters in its wayside stations, as though it too could hardly bear to leave the village idlers who loll to watch the one event of their empty day. Then at last the drab little guard blows his romantic horn, and the straggling village, the ugly yellow church, the silver-braided station-master, the plane-trees fluttering golden in the evening wind begin to move, and drop away, and vanish for ever into the unreal reality of all the things and places that, with strange, insolent independence, go on existing somehow, somewhere, although we shall never

see them any more, and their memories fade out into the darkness of our minds. Trapeza, Platanos, Dervéni, Lykoporia; Kamári, Xylókastro, Melissi, Diminio; Vello, Vracháti, Perigiali—you will none of you ever again be as you were this evening, clear-cut in glass-clear air; with long shadows, sickle-sharp, feeling out before the westering sun towards the darkness of the coming night—never exactly the same again. And yet all this beauty will still be here, when our obscure tragedy is forgotten by the few who knew of it, and we ourselves dust long unremembered under the grey half-light of the north.

The rhythm of the wheels—that night travelling south from Paris—how long ago! It has grown dark—Corinth, the Isthmus, Megara, Eleusis. The engine cries our coming across the stony blacknesses of Attica, with its deep un-English booming note, like a syren over fog-bound seas. Ghosts outside the panes, and Margaret white-glimmering and asleep beside me, as we breast and swing round the summit of Mount Aigialeos, and begin to roll down towards Acharnae and the flare and the slums of Athens in the distant sky.

April 22nd.

To-day to the British Legation. Suggested to Margaret that she had better go alone. I could see in imagination the politeness grow colder and more polite on diplomatic counten-

ances, as it transpired that she and I have been all this while somewhere in Peloponnesus. But Margaret cut through it. "Both our wits may be wanted. It's Philip, not my reputation, that's concerned. We shall have to face the world sometime."

It was as I expected; but they were very polite. Partly reassuring. They had extracted Philip from the Hellenic police—on the plea of his mental condition, largely. But it appears to have been only too good a reason. For Philip has become very strange.

Margaret has been to see him. Everything possible had been done; he was in the house of one of the Legation staff. But she came back to the hotel, looking frozen; and, once in her room alone with me, cried with that awful hysterical sobbing of women which shakes them from head to foot. He seemed to recognize her with some signs of relief; but could or would scarcely speak, in an utterly colourless, low voice; and appeared too dazed and blank to know or care what had happened to him. Head bandaged where it had struck something in the shallow water at Phaleron, but not seriously injured, externally. For the rest, how far his state is due to what has happened between us, how far to the blow, how far to the additional horrors of being arrested and shut up for most of a night in a Greek prison-cell, it's quite impossible as yet to say.

April 24th.

Margaret has been twice again to see him; the head-wound is healing; otherwise unchanged. I went to book our passage home—chilly, windy, glaring afternoon—where the rival plate-glass windows of Thos. Cook and Ghiolman, set side by side, but grimly determined to ignore each other, stare with glassy blankness straight ahead, over the dusty orange-trees of the Place de la Constitution, at the Royal Palace. A garish desolation; the crowded yellow trams clanging round the corner into the long eye-aching whiteness of the ὁδὸς Σταδίου; and a cold wind whirling idly in the shadows the old newspapers and cigarette-ends of Athens. And all the while, up and down before the Palace swung that unreal Ruritanian sentry of the King's Bodyguard, in the white fustanella of the new Hellas.

We climbed Lycabettus together in the sunset. The candles burned in the little monastery at the summit, a priest droned before the ikons—all, all unutterably vain. In silence the far clouds rested on the trinity of Attic mountains; sullen on Parnes, ghostly on Pentelicus, rosy above the red glow of Hymettus. Golden to the westward lay Peloponnesus above a wine-dark sea, golden between us and the valleys of Arcadia towered Cyllene, rampart of our lost Paradise; golden, Parnassus, guarding that Delphi we shall never see together now. Greece north of the Isthmus has become to me a promised, yet now forbidden,

land. Thisbe and Cithaeron, the oak-forests of Euboea, the great sweep of the Thessalian Plain along the skirts of Pindus, the Vale of Tempe, the white shoulder of Olympus—all must remain for the future the dream they have always been. For Margaret not Tempe and Peneius, but Wineaster and the sombre brown of Swale; for me . . .?

We have talked it out to-night.

The doctor, a taciturn, kiln-dried American, is too discreet for words—will notice nothing, predict nothing. Doesn't know, I suppose, and won't guess. Philip's dumb devil may yield to a few weeks' treatment; or it may never be properly exorcised. And similarly with the partial loss of memory he seems to suffer from, at least as regards the immediate past. He shows no change at present, only cried again quietly and childishly, when she left him to-night; and is restless all the time she is away. When she is there—silence, almost indifference. How much of the past has he really succeeded in forgetting; and what is to come now?

"Margaret, can you see at all into the future? Will our love have to go always like a muffled figure in a house of death? Selfish, at such a time? But it haunts me—so it must you, sometimes."

"It does, David, when I have time to stop and think. Only it's not so much the question haunts me, as the answer. I'm afraid there's no question about it."

"O Margaret, do you think, if it goes on, you'll have to be tied alive—for life—to him? The waste, the awful waste of you. Can't some one else—his mother—or a nurse . . .? Must it be you, no one but you? Or he might recover——"

"But if he did, we couldn't risk plunging him back into it all again. We couldn't risk doing this horror twice over. And as he is, I seem to be his one link with the intelligible world—almost like a child's mother. O David, don't make it harder—it's too terrible to think of—years and years of it right to the end, perhaps. You don't doubt me, you don't want me to do protestations to you?—the one thing I have left, the only living thing I see before me in this desert of an existence. You'll love me better for clinging to Philip, David, than if I left him, however much it hurts you now. There are things one can't do."

"Yes, being all of us so mad, so much unhappier than the animals with these scruples of ours. Sometimes they seem to me such folly—our pride, our taboos—such a mere last rag of religion. We've only one life; we could forget everything but each other for a few years. And when we began to remember, why, then it would be time to end it all. I want you. I'm jealous of Philip, though you've left him, though he's mad. It's hideous of me. But Love is so cruel—not an amiable, fat-buttocked cherub. We've always thought we did what we could to

behave fairly well, not to hurt people—and here we are—has it helped much? Oh I know we shall do as you say. You are right, I expect; we should end by despising ourselves—and, worse, each other—if we did the easy thing. But half of me rises in revolt and cries out against what we are going to do."

"David, David, don't pretend you are less determined really. I hate your treating me as a saint in an aureole raising *you* to higher things! 'Loyalty'—why should one care for it?—but we both do. It's underneath our own love. 'Faith unfaithful' I know; but, with us, not 'faithless.' And it'll be you, I know, who will keep me going, if after years like this my nerve fails in the end and I regret the youth we might have had together, damning consequences. After all, David, we shall still have each other; we shall meet still—God knows how often. We do owe this to Philip—what's happened is our fault, so far as it's anyone's—and we can never repay, never atone for one half of it. Still we can perhaps make his life endurable—happy even, happier than our own. And we're human; it's so easy for love, even like ours, to grow petty; for lovers in the end to break each other's hearts, in little ways, and to forget their own. David, if your love ever fails for me, you'll remember this night and feel my hand in yours again and, if the memory's bitter then or dull, at least it won't be with shame."

O Margaret, Margaret, how right you are—and how fantastic the new generation and the old

would both think you! "This awful earnestness in the middle of an affair!"—"These scruples in a woman who has sacrificed her honour!" We fall between two ages, I suppose; it's no great matter. But the other thing *is* true —youth goes and passion passes and familiarity cheapens and conversation comes to an end: personality like yours remains. Fifty years hence I shall remember that you never faltered, when my will failed, to-day.

May 2nd. In the Gulf of Corinth.

Left Athens yesterday morning: Margaret and Philip first-class on the steamer; I second, and careful not to cross his eyes on deck. He is absolutely quiet with Margaret, and inscrutable. We snatch stolen half-hours together. I feel restless and troubled, though not unhappy. I can't look into the future beyond her next appearance. I ought to be glad that it is so; and yet we must think what we are to do, what we are to say to those at home, to Philip's mother above all. This is where the real horror begins. The truth has become utterly impossible; and with lies there is neither peace nor end. As I sit and watch the quiet, blue waters of the Gulf slip past, it is impossible not to think, half with shuddering, half with longing, of the rest we might find together in its depths. Rosmersholm. . . Only to Margaret it would be a base betrayal of a helpless Philip. And even if I did not know she was right, there is a shrinking of the physical in me

that would make it hard for me to part with a far bitterer present and darker future, even, than are ours. It's so difficult to walk out before the last act of the play—or rather the last scene of the act. The end of the play, indeed, only the last living thing will see. But one must be strangely lacking in curiosity to fling life away as lightly as some do. To go on living is indeed the great inconsistency of pessimism; and the pessimists cannot really justify themselves, however they wriggle, like Schopenhauer. But they can at least retort: "We are not the happier because you have proved us inconsistent; and we don't think better of life, because you have demonstrated that we ought to be dead." No, this is being perverse. It *is* quite logical to say that the world as a whole is insufferable, though luck has given one a tolerable corner of it for oneself. But has it to me?

Anyway, this drama has reached the end of a scene — with the *dénouement* obscurer than ever. I feel too tired to feel very much else. Almost with detachment, after the storms of these last days, I can sit back with closed eyes in my deck-chair and see again the scenes that have passed, the three shadowy characters that struggle and blunder over their shadowy stage. Chance and Fate—twin disguises of the one Necessity—have played alike with all of us. Chance brought Margaret in our way; Chance and my folly snatched her from me to make her, by a few hours, Philip's. The rest seems to me not Chance, but

Fate; as I look back with unsealed, helpless eyes, I feel as if, though details had differed, the end must still have been the same, and Margaret and I each other's. Yet Chance stood again at the ford of Alpheios, by the beach of Phaleron. Alpheios gave me Margaret, and Phaleron has taken her away. But I can feel, as well as know, for the moment, that these things all had to be. And yet the cruelty of life!—Philip for a hasty blow, Margaret for an overwarmth of heart, condemned to this. And I too shall have paid my price before the end.

I sometimes think I must be an insufferable person.

May 31*st.*

It's four weeks now since we turned westward into the Adriatic and the sunset, leaving the cliffs of Acroceraunia like red-hot stone behind us and, above, a cold and mist-rimmed moon. Yet instead of the crises that we pictured bubbling up round our return, there has been almost calm. On such an evening, idle by the open window, it is difficult to dream that so much is hideously wrong. Before and beneath lies London, vast Phoenix renewed in the green fire of the leaves of May—the London of those few flying weeks when, if clouds and east winds allow, it seems to become a younger, whiter, lighter-hearted city. Then for one victorious moment, strong with the new life of another summer begun, which buds and flashes green along the hedgerows of England,

the country storms the town. For a moment Nature plants her ancient banner on the citadel of Man, on the once green hills he has reddened with barren brick, on the stone forests he has reared in surly dumbness to the music of her winds. And it always gladdens me to feel once more that she will win in the end and renew her immemorial reign. All cities are beleaguered cities. Always that small infantry, the grass, is pressing on to storm their stony streets. And I never see the waving spear of a thistle but I salute a friend in arms whose battalions will one day wave triumphant on the ruins of Whitechapel and before whose batteries of thistledown the mightiest Babylon lies desolate at last. This is the one comfort left, when one sees some unspoilt woodland of childhood sacrificed to the villa-builder, some new desert made and called "Progress"—to remember that in the end "the fields clutch back their strength" and the last answer to this hideous human multiplication will be a little round derisive O of nothingness. Peace at last and a silence wiser than Solomon, when not one stone shall stand upon another and the dust of ancient kings at Westminster be blown abroad to blossom in meadow-flowers.

Why should I feel this so strongly at this moment? Because I feel anarchic, severed from that society against whose laws I have secretly sinned? Because, having little hope, I turn to luxuriate in despair? But I don't feel really unhappy at this instant, only bitter; and the

attitude to society is nothing new for me. It is, I suppose, largely, just fundamental "decadence". We are all three of us "decadent", even Margaret. The "Life-force", whatever that is, has lost its impetus in us, as a river sinks into sand. We are all the last of our race; we shall none of us have children now, only a spiritual posterity, in that, where one feels like us to-day, ten will feel in ten years time. For it is in the air of our age. There comes a time when peoples stop to think; and having stopped to think, find it hard to go on again. Bees never think, that is why they form model communities, the despair of philosophic legislators—imbecile insects, slaving their seven weeks of life lest by any chance the bondage of the parents should not be transmitted to the children, to the $n+1$th generation! But the Athenians of Epicurus and Menander stopped to consider; and they concluded that it was better to stay and make the most of one's only life in Athens, instead of rushing abroad like their ancestors on expeditions to make life a burden to their neighbours. And yet historians scratch their puzzled heads over the decline of Athens! Need we look further than this? For worldly ambition and worldly greatness it is essential not to be too intelligent. And so we too shall be replaced, no doubt, by the virile Australian or the heroic Japanese—by some nation not yet quick-witted enough to reflect what is ultimately worth while. Blessed are the stupid, for they pursue happiness more successfully with their

eyes shut than we with ours open! Blessed are the unintelligent, for they shall inherit the earth! Yet blessed also are the intelligent, for they shall feel themselves superior in spite of it!

I write this stuff, because Margaret is gone to Wineaster and I have no one I can bear to talk to. I have her to write to—but I cannot vent my bitterness on her. Until she went, we still had our perilous happiness together. Now the blank future lies before us—the doctors as helpless to do anything for Philip as one knew they would be, and Margaret tied for ever to this duty of her dear quixotry. Well, we must live snatching our happiness, as the dogs drink the Nile—at a run, because of the crocodiles. "He may gradually recover, or he may not"—such the medical oracle for which they have paid, dearly enough. Already the grime is beginning on the London green—and even that has been longer-lived and purer than our happiness.

> Look on my face—my name is Might-have-been,
> I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.

Just a year ago at Cambridge—Oh, I daren't think what might have been then.

WINEASTER,
June 2nd, 1914.

DARLING DAVID,

We arrived safely yesterday. Philip's mother had got things in order so that I can go straight ahead to the main business of getting him, to start with, physically well. Out walking, at home working, I can still dream of you. It's horribly lonely. I lay awake night-long in London

thinking what it would be like, wondering whether I could bear it at all. But now the worst is here, I know it can be borne. Were you less worth it—or if you failed me, David. . . .

Philip was the first person I really loved, and the happy magic of first love fulfilled doesn't come again; and I always hated facilely forgetful people who throw all their past to the latest lion. But you have made me feel as I never felt before. Even the pain of it is half fiercely pleasant because it is for you. Only if love makes one brave, in the same breath it turns one to a coward again. There's so much to dread. Life seemed bearable, while I could bear to lose it. But now the thought of parting, of never seeing you again—O David, David.

Philip is much the same, unfathomable. Scarcely speaks; seems physically fairly well, considering; but dumb and morose and apathetic, with no, or only the dimmest, recollection of past events so far as can be seen. The pity of it almost chokes one sometimes; but, O my love, I can't repent for more than a heart-beat's space.

The first dreaded talk with his mother passed off with nothing worse than the pangs of my guilty conscience. She heard over in more detail the story of our accident in Alpheios, Philip's going off to Athens to get civilized comforts for me, and being mysteriously found in the sea at Phaleron. She seemed more or less ready to believe the explanation of some sudden mental derangement. Of course I dread the possible effect her talking to him about it might have, in reviving dormant memories of that awful night and the two days that preceded it. But we've agreed that in his present state the subject had better not be mentioned before him. It's hateful—all this deception. Hateful that we can't at least be honest and open. But it must be gone through for Philip's sake; for his one obvious idea remains his childish insistence on my company. He cannot rest if I am long out of his sight. It's as if his darkened brain kept this instinct

as the one relic of that forgotten agony. Would he feel a corresponding horror of you? It's a terrible experiment to think of. But if he proved as indifferent to you as to the rest of the world he knew, how much simpler things would become! Think, David, you could come and stay—instead of hurried stealthy meetings that I hardly know how we shall arrange. One must resist the frightful temptation to be hasty. But, in not too many months, it might not be mad of us nor unmerciful to try. He seems so dim about the past. I shall at least not pity him that. MARGARET.

And meanwhile here I sit in an office trying to find new things to say of new books, all bad, for the old reason that their authors have nothing to say and do not know how to say it. They gather in piles on my table; I pounce on my half-dozen rats and worry them, and the carcases are swept off to the second-hand dealer, as a fresh batch arrives. On lucky days there's something one has the real pleasure of honestly praising. Strange game. They write not to be forgotten, and I to forget—to forget for a moment that face in the loneliness of Wineaster, bound, as the Tuscan tyrant bound his captives, the living to the dead. Only she has bound herself. How far is behaving well any real comfort in unhappiness? It's small consolation really, but often the only one—the only sure one. Virtue is its own reward: but what a pittance, what sweated labour! I suppose fanatics may be filled with joyous ecstasy by the contemplation of their own superb characters; but people of sense have only the slight, ironic satisfaction of feeling they

have played one stroke not badly in a losing game. I haven't even that. I haven't behaved well—the best I can say for myself is that I couldn't help it. But Margaret is being heroic and there's some vicarious atonement for me in that, some sense of redeeming magnificence in her conduct, if not in mine . . . an intermittent splendour, in the intervals of wishing the world at an end. I could almost kill myself at the thought of seeing her so little, but for the intolerable thought of never seeing her again at all. It's so lonely. Letters—they half aggravate it: my uncle—I somehow can't tell him. I'm ashamed. There *is* a gulf between generations, however much his goodness tries to fling its flying bridge. I feel that he would feel—though he'd never dream of saying it—" I told you so ". I know he would be slightly, involuntarily, more shocked than we by the whole idea of our situation in the abstract. About these fundamental things the human sense of values never ceases changing—imperceptibly at the moment, as the movement of the hands of a clock; but wait a little, and the bell tells a different hour. It would hurt him that I had behaved so badly—even worse, it would seem to him than to me. It would hurt him that I am unhappy and he helpless to do anything. It hurts him, as it is, that he suspects that something's wrong. I can only try to make it up by being as nice to him as possible. Pain does make one tenderer: and then more savage again.

Still there's Hugh. I shall see him and tell him to-night.

June 4th. 2 A.M.

I have told him. We dined in his odd, unreal flat surrounded by those paintings he thinks he likes—nudities coloured salmon-pink, without faces; or speckled all over like snakes. Strange mixture that he is of the wisdom of the eighteenth century and the green-sickness of our own. But partly because he does like me, partly because he likes to know about the insides of the fellow-creatures who are allowed to know so little about his own, he always proves unexpectedly sympathetic when things are wrong with one. So that telling him—even the worst parts—was strangely easy.

"Well, it's happened. It was rash of you to go to Greece. But it's the kind of rashness everyone commits, until they've learned; and then it's usually too late. When you fall in love with a happily married woman, go to the Antipodes at once, if you've any feeling for the husband as a human being. Plato is merely the greatest pander ever known."

"Yes, I'm all wisdom now."

"Don't be too miserable about it. Sackcloth and ashes are insanitary. Without being grossly self-condoning, you may be allowed, I think, to comfort yourself with the reflection that Philip's mind was clearly unstable, that Margaret might in a few years have found

herself in much the same situation—and without you."

"And now?"

"That depends rather on Philip. He may recover completely; then Margaret must choose. No one else can. Or compromise. It is possible to love two people at once."

"She wouldn't. Philip wouldn't. And I wouldn't, if he would. Love means to me something that can't be shared, because the point of it is precisely that it's unique. It's not the physical relationship with one person or with two that would matter. It's the sense of being *alone* with the person you love, so that each has a feeling for the other that neither has for anyone else on earth. Other friends there may be; other 'lovers', conceivably; but only one—laugh at my sentimental romanticism if you will (God knows how it survives)—only one real love. 'My true love hath my heart and I have his'—that's the essential thing—not 'Chastity, my brother, chastity.' It isn't that physical relations aren't important; they are, supremely—but only in combination with the other feeling. In themselves they are mere matters of personal decency and convenience, and people should mind their own business about them. Homer knew that, when he made Andromache rear Hector's children by other women, as tenderly as if they had been her own. But why do I say all this, when it's so little to the purpose? To rehabilitate myself in your eyes, Hugh, as an unconventional modern in spite

of my romanticism? Let's get back to the point."

"Which is, as I said, that if Philip recovers and still wants Margaret—he implied in Greece, I gather, that all was over between them—then, clearly Margaret alone can decide. If, as is more likely, he recovers only partially or not at all, the case is more difficult, since he seems possessed with this fixed idea of dependence on her. It would be difficult for her to abandon him; anyway, you say, she won't think of it. If he turns out really to have lost his memory of what preceded the crash, you will be able to see her at Wineaster; if not, things will be much harder for you, and she will have to leave Wineaster when she can."

"Yes, I see all that, Hugh. Though, in my present state, not quite in that calm light."

"No, naturally. But it's important to act as if you did. In a few years' time, supposing the situation remains unaltered, you may find—you'll not believe me now, of course—that you've been luckily compelled to adopt against your will the surest way of maintaining a happy, permanent relation. It was from exile, David, that Cicero wrote to his Terentia 'If only I could see you and die in your arms!'—so different from that last laconic communication between them, the fruit of long years of married life,—'If there isn't a bath, have one put.'"

"Oh, yes, Hugh, but spare me your bachelor

commonplaces. I *know* it may be true. You can't expect me to *feel* it."

"I don't. And it doesn't matter much since your future course of action does not depend on it. And yet you must see that, though of course you and Margaret are different from every one else, still most English marriages after beginning so romantically in Heaven, end in Laodicea. The English are devoted, not to their wives, but to the convention that they are devoted to them. They hold on to permanence like grim death; and pretty deadly it is. Several of my friends are not faithful to their wives, but, oddly enough, to their mistresses. Not technically, perhaps, but in your sense and essentially. Partly, no doubt, because they see the latter not perpetually, but only at their best, only when they want to see them (and not always then, of course)—but you'll admit that it's better to see too little of a person than too much. Even the amoeba wants a change sometimes. We alone think it the ideal to be, like the Brownings, never apart from the altar to the grave."

I could see that he was running on partly for the sake of distracting me. He was doing the best thing he could. One wants sympathy; but it's not very much use, however sympathetic, just to sit and gloom with a person. Job doubtless valued the silent grief of his friends, as much as he hated their subsequent arguments: but it was probably the arguments that did most to make him forget his boils and his sheep and his asses

and his sons. Hugh must have seen what I was thinking, for he suddenly pulled himself up, as if he were giving too much argument and too little sympathy, and said: "Of course, I know it's awful for you—that you won't see her nearly enough; and that life's so short. I don't suppose it is much use my saying it; but, David, try not to be so continually thinking of your thoughts."

Good advice, were it possible to take it. He didn't throw much new light. That wasn't his fault. He isn't God to create it at a word: there is none. But I feel much better for talking with him. It's something to find that some one else agrees and understands, that one isn't lunatic as well as lonely. And yet how unutterably selfish love is! I have slipped so far in these few weeks. A little while ago I was resolute that Philip must never know, must as a matter of course keep Margaret wholly his, without a whisper of the existence of any feeling of mine. And here I talk of refusing even to share her with him. And can hardly think of his tragedy, though I have worse than killed him, for self-centred brooding over my own—when, after all, Margaret *is* in love with me and Wineaster not at the Antipodes. I don't like myself very much; but I don't care much either, so long as Margaret does.

WINEASTER,
June 26th.

DARLING DAVID,

There is no news—except that I love you. And that is none. Nothing changes here. It seems already as if

things had always been like this and Philip had always smouldered like a burnt-out log beside the fireplace. Only Mrs. Winton cannot get used to it. She resents his being as he is. Of course his father had a long attack of melancholia; but then she took him firmly in hand and he recovered. But Philip silently refuses to be taken in hand; and she loathes that a son of hers should be like this, as if it reflected upon her and upon her family, in a way that his father's illness never did. She doesn't whine about it: she wouldn't. But she hates it; and I shan't get much help from her. This is my funeral. She served her time with Philip's father. Let the generations bear their own burdens and the young bury the young. I don't mind much. She would never have more than approved of me; and it won't matter greatly if she does not even do that. It's quite true, this *is* my business; and I can in some ways do better without her. But I loathe the whole subject. If I let myself go about it, I shall break down and wail. And yet to write coldly like this must seem so hard. If it weren't for you, David, I could not look at the future; when I think of you, everything seems worth while. And yet . . . there are moments when years and years like this seem more than I can bear. I can't help realising that living away in London you may so easily not always care for me buried at Wineaster. You may so easily come to want marriage, and permanence without separation, and a home. And then—let the earth swallow me. But it's no use being histrionic; when it's at least clear, beyond shadow of excuse, what I have to do—I and no one else. I shall manage. While you love me, David, I shall be as happy as—with our perpetual partings—human beings can be. Though I force myself to know you may cease to love me, I can't realize it. It's an intellectual precaution on my part, not a fear. Yet how strange it is—the things one can stoop to do and the things one can't! It's impossible not to think sometimes how easy it would be to go off with you;

and leave her son to Mrs. Winton to look after. I don't believe even conscience could break through the happiness of being with you whom I love more than anything on earth, more than I knew myself I could love any one. It would be heaven—a guilty one—but stronger than any sense of guilt—till one was middle-aged and one could drown oneself then. Yet one can't do this thing. I always hated under my breath that " I could not love thee dear, so much, loved I not honour more "; I always felt the cavalier would have been so taken aback if his mistress had retorted—" Good-night, so do I." It was really only that he wanted to go off and kill people periodically by way of a change. And yet, as has happened to me before, I have reluctantly to own that some of these tiresome old adages refuse to be superseded. They have their truth.

I loved Philip first though I wondered about you even before that; I loved him even when I began to slip into love with you. But it was you who seemed born for me: and against that we fought in vain. Was it wrong? I suppose so. But the point is, now, that we don't love each other merely because we are mutually attractive, but also because we stand to each other for qualities we love in themselves—among them, loyalty. In the greatest loyalty to Philip, no doubt, I've failed—though he and I always knew and agreed that to promise to love for ever was mere fraud. But if we were disloyal to him now, little as we can do, we should be lower in each other's eyes. And that does matter. Why? We don't believe in supernatural law-giver or law, in sin or Sinai. We just feel it so—that's our whimsy—a whimsy that we live or die for, because it's an instinctive part of us, too old, too deeply rooted, too strongly guarded by the ghosts of our gathered ancestors, to be overborne. O David, do you think that I write you the letters of a she-pedant in casuistry? Am I one? But it's these things that I lie and wrestle with through the long night-hours

at Wineaster—don't be jealous, darling, they are few beside the hours that think only of you. But this is my fatal riddle and the answer is life and death to me. For if it were a different answer, I should be away from this place before sunrise and to-morrow night in your arms. But I can't make it different—though part of me fights like a wild beast to wrest it so. And I tell you all because I'm alone with you in the world. All else is masks, not living persons, except my sisters; and even they have become little beside you. If you gave me up, I think I should do the cowardly thing and find my refuge at the bottom of the Swale. It calls all night and day so hoarsely under my window. And yet, my darling, this sounds like a threat, a chain on your liberty. And there's none. You're always free. I shall understand, whatever you do, for I know you'll never do anything I could not understand. If the world knew—I have sometimes a blind terror of the crowd, the mob that would rush to trample us, if they knew how we'd broken their taboos. They'd judge us, as we've judged so many, on the most patent-seeming evidence, as worthless, vulgar adulterers. I go crimson as I think; and yet people write history-books and biographies and bless and damn and pardon, as if they could know. Why, if we sat and poured out our inmost souls for days to some hearer far more intelligent than they generally are, how impossible, even so, to make him understand, to convey all the nuances of what has happened between us! Even now, so soon after, as I look back, I cannot recall and recapture all the moods of transition by which I travelled from the girl you knew at Cambridge to a passion for you I can hardly bear. And yet one judges others, and will. O David, did you guess a year ago that life was like this? Ah yes, a year ago you already knew, my poor, poor love. I groan of my loneliness, with you to share life, while you suffered really alone. The blind fool I was not to see from the first at Cambridge how things stood, instead of resting in vague surmise.

But it's no good. Don't you loathe the past, David? It always hurts, whether it's the grief of happiness gone for ever, or the guilt of things one never can undo. That's what getting old in heart is—falling under the power of the past, when it grows gigantic, a vast shadow in a setting sun, while present and future lose their brightness and dwindle away. One ought never to dwell upon the past by itself, without some thought of present or future too, of the difference the past is making or will make to them—never memory without hope, even though one is eighty. That's why old letters are so awful—the devil of the past moulders incarnate in their yellowed pages and their faded ink, their faint smell of long decay. And yet it's so hard to destroy them. Please, David, do that: or compromise, as I do, and if you can't bear to burn all my letters, as I can't yours, keep only a few. They smother one else: besides who can read hundreds of old letters, the accumulations of a few years? You see the weakness of the feminine mind, David. A moment ago I was complaining that any one should read old letters; now I'm complaining that one can't. But you'll understand; and I mean it too, about keeping only a few of mine, as few as may be. So keep this one, to remind you not to keep too many of the rest. Besides there's always the danger of other eyes seeing them. Though there again I'm inconsistent and something in me rebels at the thought that the memory of our love will perish as if it had never been; and would be consoled a little if it thought that a few people like us, in the generations of the unborn, could know and understand. You see, being alone makes me foolish. Life's so short and the hours so long, away from you. Thank God for your letters, for your understanding, for your love. I am so proud of your love, as well as so much in love with it. Others can't judge us—no one: but one judges oneself, and whatever life brings me, it cannot take away the pride of having had you.—Bless you,

MARGARET.

P.S.—Hugh has written to suggest a week-end here—one "when D. can't get away", which is considerate of him. If only it should turn out safe for you to come here openly—and for Philip's sake too. On Saturday, then, at the Muker Bridge below Wineaster at ten—pray God it's fine—there's a moon—but at weather's worst, it'll be heaven.

July 1st.

It's all over—and I back in London astride my three-legged stool again. But though dim, I can't be unhappy—I mustn't, it would be such blasphemy. And such folly. Because it's to happen again and again, till. . . . Ah, there one turns one's eyes away. You dare not look too far into the future—in its further mists is always the face with the hollow eyes, that freeze the peerer into stone. The moment, the moment—that's life. Old eyes can't see things close, only far off—presbyopia; and old minds the same. The moment, the moment—they have lost the wise brave folly of living in that. They can't help it. The present's grey to them, and the faintly coloured ghosts of the far past screen it away. Margaret will be old one day, even Margaret will be old—white hair for black, the bright keen eyes filmed and dimmed and blinking with the first scattered pinches of the dust of death. Oh, the obscenity of life! Death's so stupid if one doesn't believe in Progress. (Progress after her!) But I won't think of it—why should I think of it, when, at her best, she has become mine? Only because parting forces one to

think of these things—of that longer, slower, drearier parting which must come as Time drags us step by step from our old selves, that were each other's. Love—we shall always love, that I believe; but passion goes. We shall even forget how it felt. And that's half why I write these things—half it is because of the imperious need to liberate somewhere what is beating itself against the walls within me, crying out to be uttered and made clearer in the utterance; but half, too, because I know now by experience that these scrawled pages do retain feelings that the mind forgets—though it remembers them again, when they recall. And so one embalms one's dead impulses with the belief of the Egyptians, that the soul will return, ever and again, and tenant once more, for moments in its wanderings, the mummied frame that once breathed warm.

There was green in the gold of evening when I set out on the familiar road from Hawes. I walked. To drive would have been too quick, too indiscreet; and too expensive. It was beautiful as ever in its reserved, spacious way; and the old awe returned to me before this lost expanse of England, as if it were always touch-and-go whether one ever found one's way back into its vast secret borders, or it proved to have been only a dreamland, now spirited away. Then came the memory of my first drive into it, eighteen months ago, with Philip; the bitter thought of what I had brought our old love to since then. And yet could I feel a contrite heart, when that heart

was tight and thumping with excitement at each step nearer her? It was dusk, and nearly ten, when I came to the bridge across the Swale, brown and rushing full with rain. There I waited in the shadow of the bank; impatient, yet so happy that I remember grudging even those moments their heavy flight. Life seemed, like the Swale, so full. I could have borne, almost, the thought of being changed, like the lover of some Greek tale, to the fixity of an eternal waiting there—in the shape of some new green tree that wondering rustics would have found next morning, growing where none grew before, with its boughs stretched out in a perpetual welcome, its leaves a-tremble for ever with an eternal hope. And then as the minutes closed upon the hour, my fancy ceased its folly—there she stood, before her time.

I suppose nothing, even for us, can ever be quite so wonderful again. The walk up the tumbling stream-side; the open fells that seemed to stretch themselves and widen to embrace all the earth under the half-light of the moon; the long grass of a rainy spring, dry now and still warm and smelling of two June days of sun. There is nothing, nothing, nothing in life, like love's fulfilment, the perfect union of body and soul. Is it shameful to say so, that the world keeps it so hushed? Sappho is suffered to cry it aloud, because she is literature and herself long dead, and her language with her, and only learned men read her, who can be trusted to keep in reserve

the due sense of moral disapprobation. And Catullus likewise; even Shakespeare is established, like the Church, and can do no wrong. But in our daily life we are shocked at physical love, or leer, or talk eugenics. And it is nothing to us that under our system men and women grow old never having known it, that the young are tormented by a conspiracy of silence and innuendo—as if Love were only decent when chaperoned by a midwife, passion wicked except for the financially competent. In Argos long ago the daughters of Proetus denied the godhead of Aphrodite; and the goddess turned them into harlots. That is the fate of our society, of the respectable part of it, obsessed with that sex which it will not face, because it will not clear its mind of muddle and realize that parents concern the state, but lovers themselves. Yes, the Victorians would have stood in a queue to throw the first stone at the woman taken in adultery.

But I cannot write of it. Men write too much of love—not, as the peevish say, because they exaggerate its place in life, but because at its greatest moments it passes beyond the utterance of any human speech. It is so strange, so ironic, so typical, that the supreme happiness we can give ourselves is one in which, for a moment, we lose ourselves, the sense of our identity, the sense of time itself. That instant is the climax of human life—a returning miracle that only lovers (and, perhaps, mystics) can even conceive. Then, when the eyes are darkened and the senses melt

away, life touches the summit of its arch, above the clouds that shut out so briefly that earth towards which slopes again its downward way. Strange paradox that it should be in the body's triumph that the soul feels disembodied, made momentarily free of time and space! For then at last, as we whispered together in the summer night on the moor above Wineaster, my dread of time left me and I felt for once that I could look on the radiant beauty of the world without the old hunger, the old sense of clutching at a shade. Incredibly beautiful as it was, its beauty seemed no longer the inhuman loveliness of something aloof and indifferent to mortality. It became, for the first time to me, a fit background for the crown of our lives. For our lives were crowned there at last. Man for a little was once more the centre of the Universe. The sense of littleness, of insignificance, was gone. It was for us the moon shone—the cold moon that lit my casement last December at Wineaster, that had glistened so ominously across the roofs of Athens in the spring. And pale around her shone the stars, Catullus' stars "that watch the stolen loves of men." Illusion, mere illusion. The world is still the same: and yet for me never the same again. This will have been—beyond omnipotence itself to undo. I shall live moments of it through in memory again and again for ever—the first low call of my name in the darkness by the Swale, the moonlight on her forehead, the last fading of her tall, quiet figure as she passed from me at

cockcrow through the grey tangle of the hazels down the hill.

WINEASTER,
July 20th, 1914.

MY DEAR DAVID,

I have been here three days now and to-morrow I go to Wales. Philip is looking much better physically than I expected. About his mental condition it is far harder to find out, since he is so unwilling to talk and refuses to see any more doctors. Yet even "unwilling" and "refuses" are too positive terms; he is simply sunk into himself, in a totally negative indifference to everything. He is neither friendly nor hostile, pleased nor vexed. He simply does not seem to react. I have the impression, which Margaret says she shares, that he does not remember the crisis which brought on his collapse; he has shown no emotion at the mention of your name; and I think that it would probably be safe for him to see you, if you go about it very carefully. Quite possibly it would be all to the good. For as he will not go away, it is something that friends should go to him. Apart from the cloud over the immediate past, his mind seems perfectly clear. Indeed probably it is the awful clearness with which he sees the emptiness of human life in general and his sense of absolute futility, that make him so indifferent to saying or doing anything. It is only about Margaret, as you doubtless know, that he is queer; he can hardly bear her out of his sight. Wineaster is dull and depressing. But as he refuses almost any human society, is physically well there, and has Margaret waiting on him hand and foot, it is probably as good for him to be there where he is quiet and comfortable, as anywhere else. (And I suppose there might be a financial difficulty about a home of their own away from Wineaster and Mrs. Winton?) That lady, whom I suspect of never having much approved of me, disappeared to the Continent the day after I arrived. She is one of those strong-minded,

shrewd, stupid people who cannot bear or sympathize with weakness, and cannot forgive Philip for being like this or, I think, Margaret for not having somehow prevented it. This is, no doubt, mere prejudice, not any suspicion, on her part. At all events it does not so greatly matter which, for she will see as little of them, while Philip is ill, as she can well manage. She is not blindly selfish, but coolly selfish. She sees that she can do little at best, and that only with great discomfort to herself; and so she will do as little as possible, except in the way of money. There she will be generous—as far as she considers reasonable. So you had better try going to Wineaster when you can, instead of overworking to repay me £25, which I don't propose to discuss with you further.—Yours, HUGH.

Hugh to the marrow—as final as the Judgment Day.

July 23rd.

My uncle talked to me this evening. "I thought, David, perhaps, if you've nothing better to do, we might take one of our Leith Hill walks next week-end?"

"I'm frightfully sorry, but I had arranged to go and stay with people. It was horrible of me—I've been away such a lot, I know, but . . ."

The grey eyes were fixed on me through the gold-rimmed glasses.

"Wineaster?"

"Yes."

He was going to say, "Again?" but stopped himself.

"It's quite all right, David."

"Oh, it isn't. I do feel guilty."

"About me? Oh, don't feel that. I've never

forgotten your friend Mrs. Winton's adage on the segregation of the old—or rather perhaps, as she meant it, of the young. I understand. How is Philip, by the bye?"

He knew it wasn't Philip—it was only his courtesy. And suddenly I realized that here was an old man in an armchair before me, who had little time to live and little but me that he cared to live for. And moaning over my own sorrows, I had forgotten him. I knew it would mean, not real contact, so much as a sense of division between us, if I told him. I should feel shame and constraint, and he regret. Yet he guessed too much already; and here was waiting sympathy, if perfect understanding there could not be. I couldn't refuse, I told almost all.

He minded frightfully; here was not the steel edge of Hugh's intellect; it would spoil his dinner and his sleep. I shall never, I think, do *that* for Hugh—it would be thankless to complain that it is so. Perhaps it's thankless to think it—yet it's true.

"You'll forgive me saying it, David?—but I wish you hadn't done it. Though I see it's little you've actually done at any one time—a twist here, a slip there, and it was upon you. If only you'd told her you loved her, at Cambridge, from the first! But you don't need any one to throw bitter bygones in your face. And your situation is a far older thing than I—it's always happened. But I value friendship so—perhaps, from having missed the other."

"Will you dislike me now?"

"Of course not, David. Oh, I see it all. The advanced of your generation are only carrying logically on what the advanced of mine began. We said—Ibsen said for us—'Moral formulae are absurd—it all depends on circumstances'. And you just say it a little louder—the rules of conduct are a little fewer and frailer still—more than ever 'it all depends'. Then eventually one comes to no rules at all and every one fighting for his own hand; and so life becomes impossible, and back come the Ten Commandments, and it all begins again. It may be called 'the Divine Comedy'—certainly it includes Purgatory and Hell. It was Epicurus himself, David—dear Epicurean, who said that without laws of some sort men would end in sheer cannibalism. But it's no use talking. It'll only come between us. Since you must love Margaret, love her with all your might—pecca fortiter!"

"You are an extraordinary person. You go through life with a quiet ironic smile that seems to mock at everything; and yet underneath you mind terribly about conduct, about me—I understand; and then you surprise one again, just as one thinks one has understood, with your last remark."

"Yes I thought I might be rather forgiven for that—though that wasn't why I made it."

"But you talk of rules of conduct—do we really disagree so much? Are there any that you believe in, which are not involved in the simple 'Thou shalt not give pain'?"

"No, David, I agree that's all it comes to—far better than telling people to love their neighbours, as if the verb 'to love' possessed an imperative mood; or to sacrifice themselves, as if self-sacrifice were desirable, instead of a sometimes necessary evil. It's like saying, not 'Come for a walk', but 'Come and get tired'.—who would? I sometimes wish one could teach the moralists a little common psychology. Yet I'm merely old and obvious—you meant to do it all and save them pain, and misjudged your own strength, and the probabilities. Life's so much harder than the Differential Calculus—and who can work it out with the blood singing in his ears? Hence formulae. *They* would have told you not to go to Greece. It's one of the horrors, you see, of age that one comes to feel that there's a little more sense in the moral fogeys and bogeys than one thought at twenty. Perhaps that's why, you may say, it's so important to remain young as long as possible. But I hate these post-mortems. You see I can't remain a serious character for very long. Shall we go for a walk, David?—or rather, 'Come and get tired.'"

July 27th. Wineaster.

It's all right, thank Heaven,—so far. Philip had seemed, if anything, faintly pleased at the suggestion of my coming; though he gave little sign of feeling, except a perhaps slightly puzzled look, when Margaret and he met me at Hawes. And yet this sense of relief at not being detected

does more in some ways to make me feel the guilty criminal, than anything before. He doesn't look ill, apart from the blank, lack-lustre weariness upon his face. He eats well and sleeps and walks and reads sometimes and has even talked a little since I came. Yet it's ghastly. The old tales of brides whose souls the fairies stole away, leaving their bodies to walk the earth in a maze of dream, must have sprung from realities like this. Horrible—yet I feel as if I could not bring myself to feel how horrible it is. Am I incredibly hard, really? Margaret does feel it sometimes, though she might have grown a little familiar with it by now—I caught to-night a quiver of her lip as she looked at him. For the rest, he has slipped, as it were, into the relation to her of a maimed child to its mother. What mockery to talk of compensations! Yet their relation moved me in a way I little looked for. It gave Margaret a new beauty, and this tortured tangle a sense almost of peace. But the insecurity of it all is terrible; from moment to moment, I cannot forget, the lost connection may re-establish itself in that jarred brain, the lightning-flash may leap between the brooding clouds and reveal what ruins we sit among. Of course as time goes on—if it goes on—this will grow less and less likely. But a sudden shock, I suppose, to the end might always break the spell. One is slow to probe that darkness; but Margaret has gradually found, as we had rather expected, that he seems to remember the past in a normal way down to and including

the earlier part of our time in Greece; then a gap, which one would expect to worry him, if anything could, in the grey indifference shed over all his world. In the volcano lies now a lake, unfathomable; and he has no curiosity for himself to drop any plummet into its sleeping depths. Is it hateful in me that despite all this, though things have come to such a point that I must hope one whom a year ago I loved will never be really sane again, I can none the less be happy here? Yet what good would my misery do? To-day is a new day. And life is not so lavish to any of us in the gift of happiness, that we can afford to throw it from us. Since we are happy, so be it; it will be brief enough.

Walking, this afternoon, I asked Margaret once more how she felt about it all. "Wretched, David, if it weren't for you. When you're here nothing matters; when you're gone, I live on the thought of next time. And now that your coming seems likely to be so much easier and more often, I feel far more reconciled to life. A year ago such an existence would have seemed Hell to me, even though I love you so; but one changes one's standards, as one finds life out."

" One does. And yet all the discoveries, to do poor life justice, are not awful ones."

" Not all. And then, after you, there's work —though I've hardly written a line for months— and housework, which is so good for ' these modern women '; and again, in the intervals when I sit and think, the thought of you and how superb

you are and how, even if we have been and are to be unhappy, we have at least lived, not existed. I think a great deal of the past, David, our past. I love its fixity, the feeling that I can't be cheated out of it. Do you think it's melodramatic of one to have a dramatic sense about one's own life? Does it end in pose? "

"Not if you're self-critical *enough*. Only a bad audience encourages bad acting. And it's a relief at the worst moments to be able to whisper to oneself, 'It's only a play. But—and therefore—act as well as may be'. There are not many good scenes, that's all."

"And that is why I shall always cling to the memory of one, set on an island in Alpheios one evening—how many years, it seems, ago!"

We had come to where the sunlight fluttered and danced like a swarm of yellow butterflies down through the leaves on to the brown waters of the Swale, lying quiet in a wide limestone basin deep beneath us, as though gathering strength for its next sheer leap over the rocks below. "Summer's Pool"—it was heavenly as its name. There's nothing, not actually alive, so light-hearted as the sun through summer leaves. True, there's the laughter of the summer sea. But the sea has always a past.

Yet stolen waters, even these. Philip does not like being left for hours, little as he makes of Margaret's presence when she's there. Still this evening he talked a little to me. We went out together after tea—the same walk as when I

first stayed at Wineaster, and he was angry with me for "plotting his happiness". O God, the irony! And yet walking beside me there, he seemed strangely the old Philip—the pale handsome face a little flushed, the tight, petulant mouth a little relaxed, with the effort of the hill. And so we came to the top where one stands with the fells rolling away to the sunset and the rim of the world.

"How lovely it is, Philip!"

He made no answer, his face showed no change.

"Doesn't it move you?"

"I don't want to be moved. It's very beautiful, but it's not meant for us."

"No, not 'meant'; but it happens to be there."

"I see it. But it's ceased to move me. It all means nothing."

"Are you so unhappy, Philip?"

"No."

"But I wish I could understand—you used to tell me things."

(And my insincerity caught me like heartburn in the throat—it was I who knew why, far better than he—and yet it wasn't insincere.)

"Are you sure, Philip, it's good for you to go on being here? Mightn't it be better if you tried doing something again, or seeing more people?"

"It's no use, David, let's talk of something else, if we must. I'm not unhappy—I'm happier

than you—I've ceased to want. I'm just dead—didn't you know I was dead?—let me rest. I lie still and watch you all—so busy! And the time goes—slips like water—and I'm not mad to stop it any more."

"But Philip!—you mustn't let yourself go like this. It's only because you're not quite well, that the world looks like that to you."

"It *is* like that. Don't try to rescue me. I'm drowned, sitting at the bottom of the sea. And now I see through everything, like clear water—the things I used to wish I could believe in, the things you believe in still. Let me alone, don't pull me back. I don't want your pity, I want nothing and nobody ever again."

(For the first time his voice lost its lifelessness and rose almost to a scream. And before I knew, I found myself crying inwardly with incredulous excitement: "You want nothing?—Not even Margaret?" So selfish, such a fool!)

Then the cloud of apathy seemed to settle on him; and under the dead ashes of the sunset we reached Wineaster again. I told Margaret. "Yes, he's always like that. He wants me near him, but not to talk to. Even before all this happened, I remember his irritation on the subject—his saying that even you and Hugh used sometimes to sicken him at Cambridge. Talk, talk, talk! What did you really know about it? What could you do about it? Weren't you just like infants lying on their backs and kicking—I remember his phrase—and showing only your

own indecent nakedness? And now with his general sense of futility, all that's intensified. I don't make him happy, but I'm the weak spot in his defences. The terror of losing me wars on his indifference; he wakes in the night sometimes and comes groping to my room to make sure I'm not stolen away. Then the fit goes and he's indifferent again and nothing matters any more."

And then—

"You see, David, how impossible it is for me to leave him. You won't tempt me, my darling, you won't tempt me?"

WINEASTER,
July 31*st*, 1914.

DARLING DAVID,

I feel not only in love with you but, at last, almost tranquil; as if my toes had touched bottom within reach of shore. You have been here; and Philip, so far from being worse, is if anything a little better. And now I can look forward to your coming regularly. The thought of that—and your letters—and sometimes yourself, my lover—how lucky I am! Do you know what young girls used to sing in France when they heard the nightingale?

Il y chante pour les filles
Qui n'ont pas d'ami.
Il ne chante pas pour moi,
J'en ai un, Dieu merci!

There's nothing more nightingalish at Wineaster than the peewits. But as they whistle round me on the Muker path of a morning, I too think "J'en ai un, Dieu merci!" O David, perhaps we may have each other for years—it seems too delirious to think of—I remind myself one mustn't look forward. Come as often as you can. Let the village talk, if they must. Only don't—I *must*

remember that too—don't starve yourself on bread and cheese to pay for it. Oh, that's the hardest thing of all not to be selfish about—but don't, David, please.

I've been good and obedient and really started afresh at my writing; if only any publisher will look at me again. For it's so hard to write now. Love inspires some people. But it makes everything but itself seem so unreal to me. If I could put you in a book! But no one would believe it, how wonderful you are to me, how good, whatever mistakes you have made. To think that in my romantic, green-sick way I used once upon a time to wish I had been born in some less drab, unheroic age! And so have missed you! I *was* a fool; but now I know—and what better thing could one know?—that I would not change my life with anyone's that ever lived. As women in love always think, I suppose. But even if I am like them—and why not?—I know you are you, and that's no common thing.

Yesterday we took our lunch out and walked all day. It's not always easy to make Philip go out as much as his health needs. And it's good for me too. I sometimes choke in this house, and one's always saner and wiser out of doors. Even when I was a child and mad about some grievance, I learnt to carry it out into the fields to nurse, and sure enough in a little while, like the Duchess's baby in *Alice*, it would turn into a ridiculous little pig of an object that I could throw away. (Have you ever noticed, David, that we both have the same absurd discursive type of mind?—only yours of course is much, much worse than mine.) Anyway, though sometimes I hate the monotony of the dales, yesterday it was perfect—still a good many flowers—and I just dreamed along, thinking of you—and of that bee in your bonnet about the barrenness of the beauty of nature looked at by itself, in the Wodswogian fashion—how nature is only an empty stage that *human* life must fill. And I felt that it was a sound bee after all, and made true honey. For the fells are beautiful to me

above all because of you. I loved them at first sight; but it was you who gave them a meaning and a spirit that will always haunt them now—your figure striding to me across them in the grey December daylight, your face above mine in the bracken against the stars of June. We shall grow old. But those ghosts of us will wander here unageing in our memory, until we die. Perhaps we shall not dare to meet them here in days to come—because it will be too poignant—and the very name of Swaledale grow unbearable with regret. But, O David, our lives will at least have created this.

I count the days, David. Perhaps in September we shall have the money, and Philip be willing, to go away for a little—to London? Do you guess how London too, like the fells, means one thing now for me, one street, one inhabitant? You might well be a little arrogant to think what a wide world you have made into your private domain.—Your MARGARET.

I can't write of her—I should write stuff. Far better to do as I have done and treasure here the things she's said—her own words bring her back before me better than any of mine could do. Only it makes me wonder afresh how much there is in love above and beyond desire—which yet makes desire itself more wonderful. I never counted on there being so much. I remembered how past idols had all revealed clay toes, if not clay feet, in the end; and I was prepared to find it so in Margaret too—it wasn't to matter. Love must stand that strain; even friendship often had. But the strain has never come. Margaret annoys some people—I see what they mean—so much the worse for them. And now perhaps the worst is over. We have no home; but at least

we never wanted children. And if it's hard having to keep up this Spartan wedlock, meeting only stealthily, still (though it sounds like a concession to Hugh's cynicism) it does keep the romantic vividness alive. If things can but stay as they are, even without getting easier, as in so many ways they might—Oh, I shall be able, despite my Greek moralists, to call happy two who are not yet dead. Philip *is* dead. It makes me shudder to think of him sitting in that lonely house with her night after night, like the murdered soul come back to haunt the guilty. If he should suddenly become really insane . . . or really sane, God knows which would be worse. And yet they seem to think that apart from sudden shock there's little reason for much change, now, either way. What will be, will be. It cannot hurt much if I build castles a little in the clouds. Dear châtelaine!

. . . . . .

Hugh for half an hour, white with overwork at the Foreign Office. Says there *is*, probably, going to be a war. The fools!

August 17th.

Wineaster yesterday. So happy, in spite of the world; yet one grows worn with the rush of the weeks. Philip was the same as ever, but think!—they are coming to London in a fortnight. "Lalage's coming, O"—I shall tread on air these next few days. And in France men are dying like flies. . . . O God, the madness of it—

men that love women they will never see again. Does life hold no asylum for any but the lunatic? "He that sitteth in Heaven shall laugh"—Oh spare us the jokes of God; they are too practical by half. The thought of it all gnaws at the root of happiness; one's almost ashamed to enjoy anything in such a time. At Wineaster I could forget the world—what did we owe it, that it should beat entrance at our doors? But here. . . .

September 3rd.

Met Philip and Margaret at St. Pancras. Awful crowd at the hotel. Impossible to talk. It was fearfully tantalizing; and yet seeing her was heavenly. But I've nothing to say about it. If I am not careful, this will become what I always swore it shouldn't—a mere catalogue of what one did, a cemetery of social tombstones, instead of a record of the living part of me. If one has nothing to say in this Bedlam, better shut up. And there's nothing I think of, except Margaret and . . . and that I can't bear.

September 7th. 1 A.M.

They and Hugh to dinner here. And now excitement and wine are exacting from me the usual penalty of sleeplessness. There's no more exhausting form of labour than trying to go to sleep when one can't. And there's *that* haunting me—I must have it out dispassionately. It can't go on.

And yet what strange human laughter does

go on even in the corners of the Chamber of Horrors! For Hugh was at his best to-night, handing us round the heads of the State in chargers for our amazed amusement, with all his effortless skill at X-raying the absurdities of the respected great. These were the men before whose honest, horrified vision Europe has drifted into this, who are somehow to steer us through it, somehow to repair it in the end. God help us—yet how we laughed! Till Margaret broke in; "Hugh, now that David's drinking it all in from you, do take him in hand. He's got into his head some utterly lunatic idea—has he confessed to you?—that he ought to join the Army. We'll solemnly promise our host"—she turned to my uncle—"not to start an argument about who really began the war. And you'll agree this *is* a good cause." My uncle nodded and was silent; dreading the question about me, yet knowing it must come.

Hugh shook his head.

"You must know as well as I do, Margaret, how David always asks one's advice and takes his own; and that he's always reasonable except in his conduct. Of course it's absolutely grotesque that we should be sitting here solemnly discussing whether or not, with his brains and personality, he should go and get shot in a Flanders ditch. And yet with David . . . he'll listen to us, as you'll see, with that air of sweetness and light, and pay not the slightest attention to anything we've said."

"Don't drivel, Hugh. If I'd made up my own mind, it might be true. But I haven't and can't. Though on general grounds I don't doubt for a moment what one ought to do. And what real reasons have you against?"

"None that you're capable of listening to. Margaret, you'll agree that the real reason is, that he's simply too valuable a human being to squander in the first hundred thousand. And that he won't admit."

"Who could? Very valuable one would be proving oneself by that! Would you?"

"I'm certainly proposing to act myself on that supposition and stay where I am."

"But you're being valuable where you are, at the Foreign Office. I'm not."

But Margaret broke in. "Of course you are. And why should people go and fight anyway? Why should all the things in life that matter, be suddenly pulled about our ears, because some individuals we never knew existed, disagree? Supposing the Germans do take our Colonies, or whatever else on earth they think they want, what then? Either they leave existence tolerable for us, or they don't. If it's tolerable, good; if not, we can kill ourselves *then*, when we know it's necessary—and painlessly; instead of on the off-chance and by some horrible lingering death on a battlefield. I've always thought that. How else are wars to stop? Supposing we do win this one, there'll always be someone else—the French, or the Japanese . . . no end, no end of it ever. You

think it's merely a matter of being killed: there are women that you leave behind."

"I hadn't forgotten that, Margaret. I think you may be right. I understand your attitude as I never can understand the sort of pacifist who sentimentalizes aloud about the sanctity of life and the shedding of blood; as if every day of peace didn't mean to millions a sort of life worse than the clean finality of death; as if blood were mysteriously so much worse to shed than tears. But I see your point, Margaret. Only I feel that as we have by a majority agreed to have a war, and not to fold our arms, it's essential that we should make the war as harmless as possible by winning it, or, much better, by not losing it. I do feel that we and the French are on the whole a more valuable part of civilization than the Germans. And now that the union of Europe is gone, we just fall back on the next largest unity —one's own country. And whatever the right or wrong of these damned abstractions, I can't think coolly of Cambridge going the way of Louvain, of the English villages we know being trampled into tumbled brick and dust. Am I parochial? Perhaps you're right. But we can't debate now. It won't help the millions of an England economically ruined, if the intelligentsia fling themselves with a superb gesture from London Bridge. And whoever is beaten, *will* be flayed."

Margaret gave Hugh a look that cut me to the quick; but not Hugh, who just shrugged his

shoulders with a smile: "David has made up his mind—now, at all events. And you know how impossible, once he's got romantic, it is to hold him." But my uncle saw and understood—"Yes, Mrs. Winton, we can't hold him. We 'intellectuals' have so long thought of ourselves as apart from the rest of the world. We've washed our hands of it for years; we've held our tongues and let the Northcliffes talk. And now the world won't be ignored: it is dragging us down into the middle of it."

"Yes, it has run mad and it's going to kill us. But I don't see why on that account David should run mad as well."

The slow voice of Philip came from the corner, as he tapped the ashes from his pipe against his chair. "Exactly, Margaret. Only people can seldom give you their reasons for running mad. The trouble is not so much that the world won't be ignored, as that we can't make up our minds to ignore it."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, David wants to despise the rest of the world, not to ignore it. He was like that at Cambridge—proud as Lucifer, under his modesty. And he can't despise it comfortably, if he feels that it's despising him, instead, for a coward. He'll go into that Hell, as the English are said to go to Heaven, because he thinks it due to his position. And you and I, Margaret, shall read about it at Wineaster; having no views about our position." And Philip relapsed into silence:

but the discussion came abruptly to an end. It had been personal all through; but it seemed now suddenly to have become so. Hugh gazed into the fire, and Margaret at me. Once or twice before Philip has indulged in these outbursts which make one wonder for a moment if his brain is really under any cloud at all. For what he said is devilishly true; though only a half-truth. And now I must go to sleep, for it is striking two, and I must apply for a commission to-morrow. I dare not think about it any more. Decisions like this have always come to me suddenly after long agonies of uncertainty—when I resolved to tell Margaret at Cambridge; when I told her in Alpheios; and so now too, when, for the sake of this strange pride which is tangled with our love, I go near to break her heart.

September 7th. 6 P.M.

Saw her off to Wineaster. Philip there, and fearful crowd. Couldn't talk properly. Too awful.

WINEASTER,
Sept. 8th, 1914.

DARLING DAVID,

There's nothing between us, is there? I've been tormented by the thought of having seemed bitter to you—to be honest, I felt it. I shouldn't have. Yet it was natural. I was jealous. Wasn't I more to you than the reputation of being as brave as a couple of million other young men in England and God knows how many millions elsewhere in this demented world? Wasn't I

more to you than the Cambridge you see threatened with the fate of Louvain? Cleopatra was to Antony. Were you, I began to wonder, going to talk next, like Rupert, about " the long littleness of love " as compared with the chance of killing people? It was jaundiced—yet true. I should still feel so, if I let myself think about it—but I love you too much for that, in spite of all. Surely what tears the world in half, shan't separate us or spoil our love? Perhaps I felt as I did because I'm a woman and women are supposed not to see things in that general, universal light which men preserve; men, who are always reminding us, with truth perhaps, that *they* are never too particular. This is my nonsense, darling, to stop myself crying—not bitterness. I am being good and trying to comfort myself with what you say—that you won't be ready to go to the front for twelve months (Honest?) and that you'll be able to come as often as ever till then on week-end leave. And I suppose it's true that by next summer it will all be over (surely it must?) or people will be badly needed. Not so badly as I shall need you, darling. But let be. I've been reading a good deal of French lately, Michelet and Taine and people. They're always so queer and interesting about us; according to the first-named the supreme English characteristic is pride (which at once reminded me of Philip's strange outburst at your uncle's that awful evening). And Taine will have it: " le fond du caractère anglais, c'est le manque de bonheur ". Cause and effect, pride and misery?—I feel ruefully ready to agree. Yet such generalisations are really only a highbrow game—they save one being " too particular ", for a moment or so.

O David, why do I fence like this? I think you're mad. But I don't love you any less—more, if that were possible, for the way you at all events live up to your madness. I don't want to make it harder for you (unless I could make it impossible). I know what it must be costing you to keep it up. And though staying at home

and thinking does seem to me even harder than going is for the man, I realise that the physical pain you face, whatever sentimentalists may say, is worst of all. And yet the thought of you in pain. . . . Is it really only physical cowardice that keeps us alive in such a world, believing in the face of all the facts that the moments when we are actually happy balance the rest? Hope—one always hopes. But this, coming when we dreamed the worst was getting over, makes me almost feel as if I couldn't start again. But that is base of me. If one lives one should live with a good grace; not make miserable one so dear as you to your MARGARET.

Have I just sacrificed her, too, to my egotism? Done self-sacrifice at her expense?—like my namesake singing psalms after setting Uriah in the forefront of the battle? This benighted idealatry of mine. Oh, that too is unfair. But I can't argue. Indeed it's too late to think—now.

September 12th.

It has come. I report at Leicester to-morrow—it's on the Midland main line, at least, if it might have been nearer to her. And now to-night I feel like one on the eve of execution—burning old letters, putting away things I expect I shall never need again. Something of it I have felt before—the same curious ghostly sense of haunting for the last time a world to which one has already ceased to belong—at the end of other chapters, leaving Rugby, leaving Cambridge. It isn't altogether unpleasant; there's a certain new sense of lightness in being disembodied, of liberation in breaking old ties, with the new ones

still uncertain and unformed. One's petty possessions cease to possess one. One throws to fortune a number of her hostages to do with them what she will. I shall hate and loathe the Army—discipline, regimental traditions, and the rest of it. But the agony of decision will at least be done with. If life is hard, it will be the easier to lose. But shall I take this with me to write in? Shall I have thoughts or impulse to write? I shall be lonely, if seldom alone; yet in the corner of a Mess, after a day on a barrack-square? I will take it, but without much expecting to write anything. Perhaps all my life I have been, as Hugh said, too given to thinking of my thoughts; now, at any rate, that will cease. One thought, one name, will be enough.

July 26th, 1915. *Salisbury Plain.*

To-night, after ten months, I have unearthed this object; forgotten,—no, ignored, so long. The end of another chapter—a blank one this time—and in three hours we leave for France. My second thoughts were wiser; I have not wanted to sit and brood on paper. In this quick life the impulse has seemed to go. And I have been happier than I dared hope; and that too has been a reason for not writing here. However hateful the petty intrigues of Battalion H.Q. and the stupidities of the "regular" mind and the drunken guest-nights in the Mess, there has always been Wineaster once a fortnight to look forward to and live for and remember. Now

this too ends; and yet the thought is not so utterly unbearable, as I dreaded it would be. With the loss of free-will in this machine, one grows fatalistic—and that does make things more possible to endure. I am a more stoical, less sensitive, duller, healthier person than the writer of the earlier pages of this a year ago—so it seems to me as I glance back over them again. It had to be so, and I should be glad of it. There are limits to what one can suffer.—Now, since saying good-bye, I feel inside like stone. Yet we have been happy too—almost a sort of married happiness. Philip, too, has hardly changed—so it goes on, "tacitisque senescimus annis". It makes me suddenly remember the first time I ever saw that phrase in the sawdust of Carey's *Gradus* at Rugby and tingled with the beauty of it, even then, when it could mean so little to me. "We grow old through the silent years"—so silent—a silence that can be felt.

How grotesque at our age! And yet we of the war shall be old before our time, perhaps, if ever old at all. The candle gutters in the bareness of my emptied hut. Through the summer dark comes the low distant roar of the transport of the Brigade before us getting on the move . . . the roar of Swale through the white midnight of June, and Margaret in my arms. Down the wind from the Mess float wild snatches of the tune some half-drunk player is thumping on the Mess-piano for the last time to a roomful of drowsy, half-hysterical officers; and then the

first chirp of a waking bird. By now along the crest of Rogan's Seat and Gunnerside a red streak runs above Wineaster. The top of Kisden rises like a grey ghost from the dark; and the owl has made room for the peewit in the fields round Margaret's lawn. If only, if only she's asleep . . . But for her I should be going now so gaily, so glad to get away from the pedantries of the barrack-square. Even as it is, with the awful tightness across the chest that thinking of her brings, I feel the relief of action at last. To go riding out into the dawn—my old nursery day-dream come true. There *is* a cause—not "The Empire" nor the cant they talk at Westminster—but simply the untouched beauty of this English countryside awaking to the beauty of a summer dawn. Sentiment? The realities I go to will be hard enough.

September 8th, 1915. *London.*

I must take to this again, I think. I could have written in it these three months in France. Not that I missed it; but finding it packed away here upstairs in a drawer beside my hated last will and testament—dog-eared, with pencil rubbed to faintness—and re-reading it all, has fascinated and saddened me to-night. It is a strange enough sensation in itself to pass so suddenly from the Somme to the Strand, and find that somehow London still goes on. And this record of things that seem now so long ago, makes even stronger the sensation of being a ghost returned from pur-

gatory to the world where it once lived and played a part which itself had half forgotten. How naïve, how incredibly simple I was when I wrote the beginning of this! And how one forgets it all, agonies and ecstasies! Their effects, the things they made one do, keep some hold on the memory; but they themselves are as hard to re-imagine as physical pain, as the riotous magnificence of some dawn one saw last year. I hate to own it; but it is so. Why pretend? If one wants to remember, one must write things down; one is smaller for forgetting. But younger too? Perhaps. But is being really young quite worth it? My God, how one suffered! Not that one ceases, but I shall never be so sensitive again. Time and the brute health of active service. Ought I to feel remorse, now I can see the past steadily? I don't, really—though I know it's due. Perhaps I shall at Wineaster to-morrow. But it all seems so remote. Stains wear away . . . not "the perfumes of Arabia", but time, just time whitens everything at last. And yet those people are so hateful who go back on the past and deny it. It was all ghastly; and it was glorious; and I felt both as I shall feel nothing ever again. There was more of me to feel, before they forged me into a machine-gun. Too successfully and well.

And Margaret—so constant, so fine, so enduring—do I love her less? No, never. Am I less in love? Perhaps; yes, I suppose so. It is simply that the flush of first love, the surprise,

the strangeness, the wonder, have gone as they were bound to go. There has been no shadow between us; but the world in its madness is too much with us now. Our relation has become, as I thought, more like marriage—but that too is perfect. The magic goes, like the colours of the early sun; but the white daylight is clearer and steadier and more lasting—till the coming of night. We have lost the ecstasy; but we have gained instead a treasure of common memories. And yet, and yet. . . .

> Nothing can be as it has been before,
> Better—so call it—only not the same.

Are my tragic days over, with nothing left but a prosaic death in France? I suppose so. And yet when I think of to-morrow and Margaret on Hawes platform, I don't believe a word of it. How hard and horrible one has had to grow!

September 9th. 12.30 A.M.

Yet it's true—things are leaving marks on us all. My uncle is far older—made miserable by the war, by the old men at his club, the hatred, the mouthings of politicians—all the things that make the atmosphere of England so poisonous compared with the front. "David, why to God can't people see that belittling your enemy is belittling yourself, unless you can beat him in a week? And, anyway, why hate? People didn't in the eighteenth century; yet Chatham and Wolfe weren't pacifists, decency didn't make

cowards at Fontenoy. Now we're all 'sportsmen' and not a shadow of chivalry. To listen to some of these damned bishops would sicken a dervish. And of course when the war's over, they'll forget the ravening hogs they've been, so as to be able to do the same thing all over again next time. And people will let them forget. I'd like to live till then, just to rub it in to them. If it weren't for you, David, I should leave all that I died possessed of, to print and publish a collection, in tree-calf, of all the devilries they've publicly uttered. And to think that in the past we gave a moment's thought to the good opinion of people like this! Public opinion! Morality—how dare they speak of it, who have not the rudiments of decency or generosity or pity in themselves? What if there are swine in Germany too? Why copy? Are people like this at the front, David?"

"Last Friday I was arguing with a company commander whose idea of dealing with any prisoners he may take in the next push, is to put them in a dug-out and throw bombs on top of them. But don't look so horrified; when it comes to it, he's far more likely to throw them cigarettes. But it wasn't any good arguing. It's the British imagination. It will need a hundred Germans in the flesh to convince and convert him; but it will be instantaneous then."

"Yes, but unfortunately that sort of persuasion isn't possible at home. And they drive me mad, David. Life's become a poor business —hardly worth sheltering in cellars, when *they*

come. That reminds me—you remember the old maid whose dame-school you once went to. They got her last time—running downstairs in her night-gown—broken glass in the jugular—five minutes. Poor terrified creature."

A hundred things, and you never realise: and then one brings it home like a bayonet-thrust. Miss B.—my first tearful days at school—the sun in the green lime-leaves down her quiet suburban road—the ache of the first separation from my mother—the great grandfather-clock in the schoolroom by which my weary impatience soon learnt at least to tell the time—and the motley crew of children bowed round the school-room-table over Colenso's yellow arithmetics (little guessing what excitements the wicked bishop had extracted for Christendom from that dull subject at the expense of Moses). Miss B. at the head of the table, feeding her cherished cur on buttered-toast; with that red mottled look of an angry hen, so prim, so genteel, so irritable, so devoted. You did not belong to our century, Miss B. You should have died before the three-volume novel and the hansom cab, with the lichen long since spotting yellow your tombstone in some drab suburban churchyard, where the staid Victorians never stir amid the crash of bombs with a dream of the Judgment Day. The Time-Machine played you some hideous trick and dragged you into an age you were never built to face. I remember so well that morning when

she burst into tears before an embarrassed schoolful of children, because her dog had pneumonia; and all the time Providence in its quiet way had this in store. Yes, Providence will " larn you " to be a timid old maid alive in such a world.

I hadn't much success in consoling my uncle. He feels his philosophy has failed him and the comic view of life won't stand the war.

" It's no use, David. I've made the mistake of being incompletely selfish. But for that I could sit in my armchair and rest on my laurels in the proud consciousness of having ' given ' a nephew to my country. But it won't do. I feel a cumberer of the earth like your old Laertes grubbing in his market-garden while the heroes fell before Troy. And even at that, my last potatoes were all blight."

September 15th. Wineaster.

O God, to stop the minutes passing! To think that I must go back to that hell—Such peace here . . . untouched, unspoilt, beyond the reach of war. As the rest of the world has grown darker, things have lightened a little here. Philip is better, though Margaret, living always with him, hardly sees it. He is not a lively person now, nor the shadow of his older self; but it is as if there were cracks in the mask, some signs of human feeling. And yet there's the devil in this too—it makes him show more signs of fondness for Margaret—and a hideous jealousy rises in me at the sight of it. God, I wish I knew whether I

was, compared with most people, a quite loathsome character; or are we all like this underneath—white fleshy bloated creatures with many legs in the darkness under every lifted stone? Think of it: I ruin my closest friend, I rob him of the woman he loves; he begins after years to lift his head again; and instead of thankfulness, jealousy! How I must have made him suffer! I told her to-night I was growing jealous. "You are a fool, David. You think I can change from you to him?"

"As from him, darling, to me."

"Yes, David, but if you had asked me sooner, I should always have been yours. I shan't change now. Don't invent new troubles—God knows we have enough."

She is older, tired-eyed at moments—what a struggle!—alone and worse than alone—wishing Mrs. Winton were here, when she's been away; away, when she's been here. As she is now, damn her! Yet she has always been nice, in her odd way, to me; she is just incompatible. And she admires Margaret—at a distance. "Queer people—you modern young, Mr. Halliday (tapping my foot with the ferule of her umbrella). You aren't Christians, yet you behave decently enough. You go to the front——"

"Yes, to turn the other cheek. Very Christian to go to the front!"

"——and Margaret looks after Philip like any good Catholic. I believe it's all pure arrogance really. You want to deny the Almighty

the credit of the Ten Commandments by pretending you've invented them for yourselves." Here's approval. Yet to-day I wondered if she hadn't begun to suspect Margaret and me. Curse her, curse her!—to be here between us when perhaps I shall never see Margaret again. And it's worse because (whether or no we love each other less passionately than when love was new—and yet the moment we met again, I couldn't really think it) I do feel more than ever the protective longing—to take her away from this year-long strain and horror. What a bloody time women do have!—no wonder they punish us in return.

. . . . . .

Walked this evening. Philip insisted on coming. Poor Philip, to be grudged this. He talked much more. Is translating the whole Greek Anthology into verse—ploughing straight through instead of choosing the best ones—just like his strain of stupid self-mortification. But it pleases him—"After all even the bad ones," said he, "are better than most modern poetry. And one epigram takes just about the right time; and there's no end. An infinite vista of adequate meals."

And then—"David secretly disapproves. Thinks I ought to be killing the living instead of keeping the dead alive . . . which is, as a matter of fact, slightly more valuable, and much more harmless. Besides I'm keeping myself alive too, and Margaret from weeping me in absence." I

started guiltily at that. Luckily Philip was in front of me, on the hill-path there beyond Crackpot Hall, where it's only wide enough for one. I glanced quickly round at Margaret, but she wearily shook her head—mere ridiculous unease of conscience.

"I don't in the least want you to do it, Philip, if you're lucky enough to see no reason why you should."

"David's usual Christ-like tolerance. I wish you wouldn't be so persistently noble. You don't really mean it. You say 'lucky' and mean 'mean'. You're the least little bit, David, of a pious fraud."

"Very well, you shall write me an epitaph to that effect in the form of an epigram from the Anthology. It'll take up nicely from lunch till tea one day." But I was an utter, unthinking beast to say it, all the same, with Margaret there. By the little wood beyond we sat down in the long warm grass and Philip read us some of his curious, cold, effective versions. Strange Philip —I couldn't help feeling that somehow his skull had shrunk and his brains grown smaller. The dark, explosive Philip of old—the glooming, vacant-eyed ghost of these last years—are they turning now into a calmer, duller, almost commonplace middle-age? Will he settle gradually into one of those shadowy figures with "pasts" one can never believe in, so quietly dim is the present? Into the stupor of the middle-aged, wondering tranquilly why youth, with so much in life to

enjoy, is so tragic about things and likes unhappy stories and the bitterness of Housman? Has Philip begun to forget the tragedy of all life, as well as his own? A placid middle-age for him, with her, while I moulder under a wooden cross in the earth of Picardy? All for the best—perhaps—I shall not know, nor grudge, nor envy then. Well-behaved, the dead. O God!

It was quiet there, with a little curly wind among the hazels and the shadows slowly westering on the hills, while Philip in his droning poetry-voice read us the loves and deaths, the dead laughter, the dead indecencies, the dead loveliness of paganism. And Margaret's eyes and mine meeting and glancing away again, as we lay listening on each side of him, streaking the long grass between our fingers. At last he stopped and we were silent, till a colder gust and a cloud across the sun warned us that the end of one more thing was come. "What are you thinking of, Margaret?"

"Of David's going back to France—like the sun in the hazel-trees—it makes them golden for a moment—God burning there—and then . . ." She burst out crying.

. . . . . .

I can't sleep—three nights now. At moments I think what has happened can be only a nightmare—years ago—not real. And yet I'm here—midnight in mid-Channel, bodies asleep all around me and, endlessly, the roar and rattle of the screw.

Nothing stops. Whatever happens, the engines of the world go on. I must get back my self-control. One has to go on, on too—I forget why—till. . . .

We were fools just once too often. Still it was the last night; and it would have been all right if Margaret hadn't crept back a second time as it was beginning to grow light. Sleepless; and it was too unbearable alone. She stood there, dazed, by the window; in the darkness I could see her body shaking from head to foot. I got up and put my arms round her. Side by side we stood, looking westward up into the heart of the fells. The low stars were growing fainter. We watched them, as if somehow our fate were there—would they fail, or reach the sheltering shoulder of the hills before day caught them in the sky? So like "Stand-to" in the trenches, watching one more dreary dawn creep over No Man's Land. A creak by the door, a light, and Philip standing there. He had that look I had seen before—the look of the old Philip come back again—the look of the morning at Olympia. As I remembered, I saw in his eyes that he remembered too.

He walked across the room and touched me as if to make sure that I was real. There was a silence. I thought he was going to faint. But he turned and, stumbling a little, vanished from the room. I am hag-ridden by the memory of his face; Heaven help me, if I'm ill, ever, and delirious. Twice, my God.

The terrible quietness of it all—as if he were sleep-walking. If only he had been! But there was the memory in his eyes. Silent?—no wonder. There are things beyond words; and when I think of all the concentrated horror of the desolate past that one lightning-flash must have revealed to him then. . . .

That was all. So little. No storm followed it. Margaret found he had locked his door; and it was still locked that morning, when I drove away from Wineaster, answerless. That was yesterday morning, only yesterday. Margaret's self-control had gone. I'm sure Mrs. Winton guessed all, then. We were both past caring about telling old women lies. To leave her anyway—and now to leave her face to face with that! He may be mad by this or dead, or fully sane. Margaret by his bedside now?—and I here in this desolation, the rain beating up the Channel,—and no news, none, not possibly, for days.

September 23rd. Bray-sur-Somme.

I must keep on writing—here with no soul I can talk to—or I shall go off my head. If it were only possible to stop thinking once for all; instead of thinking round and round and round it, in the hopeless hope of thinking things, somehow, into being better than they are. If only I were cleverer at finding distraction in things outside, in the strange scenery of this mad nightmare . . . the lighthouse of Le Havre on its headland whir-

ling its ceaseless sword of flame round the blackness of the rain-swept Channel; the flares on Havre quayside, dead-white on the torrent of white faces pouring down the steamer's gangways; the interminable train drooping there in the darkness, till with the sunrise it started into galvanic, uneasy motion ; the slow clank through the slums of Havre, with the absinthe-eaten faces of its workers slouching factory-wards once more; the day-long, winding crawl through the fluttering poplar-trees of Normandy; the bolted omelette and coffee at Monterolier-Buchy, that halfway house to Hell, with its impassive, business-like Frenchwomen gathering in the five-francs of men who will never come again; the panting struggle of our weary engine into the gaunt disdain of Amiens (what memories of old holiday-journeys to Switzerland and Italy, that never glimpsed visions of this, through the windows of their wagons-restaurants, as they swept so gaily through!); and so to the puffy little branch-line and Méricourt l'Abbé at last. I felt last night, in all my misery, as if I were coming home. Our memories twine themselves so quickly and so closely about the strangest, unfriendliest places that we haunt a little while in our wanderings. How many a Café du Commerce or de la Jeunesse on the roads of Picardy—dingy, squalid, mean—one remembers now with a half-regret, because they echo still the laughter of voices that made this night or that so light-hearted, before they too went out into the darkness where all

voices die away! The very names of these villages, even if I lived to be old, would sing themselves in my head to a strange, half-forgotten refrain—Bouzincourt and Méricourt and Morlancourt and Dernancourt, Bécourt and Maricourt, Montauban and Mametz—and beyond the line, those names we shall hardly live to see—Morval and Longueval and the sullen thunder of Bapaume. Even if I grew to be old, I should sometimes go dreaming back again down these long, poplared roads, over the heave of this set-faced land, so beautiful and sinister and hard. . . . Amiens welcoming the first of the English with ecstatic shouts of "*Daily Mail*"; Bonnay, where spitting old peasant-women held their doors against us; Villers-Bocage with its dark château, whose master welcomed us in his entrance-hall in quieter guise, with tall candles burning at his head and feet. And above all, the first far sight of war, the night-horizon aflicker with the witch-like beauty of the flares that rose and hovered and sank, as corpse-lights over a stagnant marsh, all down the glimmering line. Looking back, it seems as if I had been even happy, by contrast, when I came out here before. I *was* happy then, in the moments when excitement, like wine, drowned memory. Margaret was safe, at least; and I had not fully seen—I had looked away and she had never shown me—the depth of her misery for me. And we hoped. And now still no letters. Well, I have work now to keep my thoughts from gnawing through the day. One

can make the men's lives a little easier than they might be, for the little longer most of them have left. If anything could comfort me at this moment, it would be their obvious gladness that I, whom they trust in a pathetic, unreasoning way, am back again—as if I could save them! One looks for no repayment for what one does for them; and yet it comes—a glance or two when I come back, a few words overheard in billets—it's more than enough. It makes me wonder. The old problem—what shall we do not to be wretched?—does the answer lie, not in loving one other human being utterly, exclusively, in world-forgetfulness, as I have, but in caring for a number and not caring or looking for any return? I have loved Margaret and, once, Philip, and felt, in a different way, for my uncle and for Hugh; and the rest of the world was nothing to me. I have had moments of ecstasy and times of happiness. But how one pays for them! I can understand better now what used to seem the incredible sacrifice of those cheerful, self-regardless persons who give their lives to common causes,—reformers — nurses — saints. They have their reward in this world,—less intense pleasure, but surer; and far less pain. For passion, in some way or other, one always seems to pay. And yet if I had another life, I should still love the One, not the Many. I'm made so. I like best those who are like that. I admire the others, but I love only those that love. "Nothing like leather", as they say. O Margaret, Margaret!

WINEASTER,
Sept. 21st.

MY DARLING,

I've had your letters (bless you for them), one from London, one from France. I'm afraid my last must have missed you in town. I'm tormented with the old doubt—shall I tell you all and make you helplessly miserable, or hide things and make our intimacy less perfect and you perhaps just as unhappy from suspecting sufferings I may be keeping from you? Perhaps it's best, really, to hide the small things that might be magnified, and to tell the bigger ones, as quietly as I can. And yet I always seem to tell you all in the end. I'm calm again, as you see. But things have been rather bad since you went—fool that I was to break down that night and go creaking recklessly about the house past Philip's door! O David, forgive me. Philip is—O darling, you were right, with that shock his memory returned. About noon the day you went, he came down—looking like death. I couldn't face things then, I couldn't have it out amid all the misery of your going—but we each knew that the other knew. It was awful—drifting like dead people to and from the meals we could hardly pretend to touch. His mother has guessed; will not speak to me except when she must. O David, this place is Hell.

Philip and I talked afterwards. His bitterness is white-hot about the past—but he's ceased cursing me, since he found I had, and made, no answer. But instead of killing his feeling for me, it's made him madly jealous about the future. Life is a series of scenes. He cannot get over it that I can go on loving anyone so treacherous as you. He goes over your conduct again and again, till I can bear it no longer and fling out of the room. Poor Philip—I can understand him better than myself. Then he realises that to attack you to me is worse than useless; and turns to appeals to the memories of our first happy months together. It's too terrible—what can I do?

And yet in the midst of feeling an awful pity for him, I can't help feeling resentfully, too, that he can think only of his side, not mine. I have always felt that. He and I *were* happy together—one soon learns in life that one must take people as wholes, faults and all, or leave them. But his egotism inevitably made some difference from the first. And now he will not see that our love is only part mine to surrender, if I would, and that if my feelings are wrong, they are not the less real. I must "cease writing to you," David, "cease seeing you"—or he will kill himself. In ruder times one held the pistol at the woman's head; now at one's own. And yet I'm unfair. But what can I do? Temporize? I have, and shall. But I know my Philip. And living under the eye of endless suspicion—what effect will it have on him, and our relations? What can I say to him? that I have stayed with him in the past, despite everything, and shall now? He won't share me, still less take the lesser share. And I'm terrified of his carrying out his threat, or making himself ill again. Shall we have to go deeper than ever in deception—stolen letters, stolen meetings (O David, if meet we ever shall—)? I suppose so. But I shan't give in at once. I shall fight for time.

Don't worry about me, David. I've recovered myself. Sometimes I feel hardened through and through. But I know that only death can come between us now. I write this on the fellside, where we lay that June night last year, before the shadow of all this began.

> And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure,
> The hills sleep on in their eternity.

O David, your awful going—made by circumstances so much worse than I had ever dreamed—so little like the parting of your Hector and Andromache, that you and Philip quarrelled with me about, last year (do you remember) in the Adriatic, because I thought it cold. I read again last night the rendering of it you made for me.

It's not too cold now—I couldn't bear to finish it. There *is* that about poetry. Till you suffer you never understand it; and then it makes suffering just a very little easier to bear. O darling, there are moments when, thinking of you and of our love, I feel, even at times like these, that our groans about life are half untrue—for ourselves at least; that I could not really bring myself to dynamite a world, which has produced things so wonderful and so various as poetry and our love and you. One forgets that there are millions who have life's unhappiness without its poetry or its love. But sometimes I must forget everything but you. O David, don't be too brave.

MARGARET.

September 25th. The Trenches.

It's awful; but not as bad as it might be, I suppose,—or as it may. Margaret has her head; and her task, hard as it is—much harder than sitting and being shot at—will get done, if it's possible to do. I'm tired of questioning vainly why things will go like this—indeed it's fatuous to ask at all. Destiny. No illusion is quite so tenacious as this we have of free will. Yet it's a relief sometimes to let it drop and fold one's hands and see clearly for a moment the wires that pull one's puppetry. Not hard for us, who are here to die because belligerent politicians dislike each others' speeches and are afraid of their own. Not hard, as one sits here in the infinite peace of a summer afternoon at the front. It might be already deep in eternity. It has all grown so familiar, seems so changeless—the heavy drone of flies through the long stagnant hours among the flowers that hide the parapet; the

quiet glassy shimmer of the heated air; the brooding ruins of Fricourt and Mametz, that look as if none had stepped or breathed there for a hundred years; the long poplared line of the Peronne road, desert as some Roman way among the pasturing sheep on the high downs at home—with only here and there a dark splintered gap in its league-long rustling colonnade. The minutes drop, one by one, noiselessly away. There has been nothing like this since the world began; yet it seems as if it had always been. Strange sinister beauty—a landscape like a hundred others under the autumn sun, yet charged, as a blue thunder-cloud holds the lightning, with omnipresent death—death crouched in the blackened forks of stricken trees, death like a spider in the hideous tangle of the rusting wire. It makes me remember the figures that sit shrouded and silent through clash and conflict on the stage of Aeschylus; and behind, like an endless undersong of blinded anger, goes on and on the droning of the summer flies. In this vastness and this quiet the heart's small fretting dies away. One remembers again that in a few years, months, days maybe, all this anguish that tears us will be a forgotten thing. My thoughts go wandering up the line, past Bécourt ridge, where behind the ruined château of the Comtes de Valicourt lie by ones and twos the men I have lost; past the gutted factories of Albert under the outstretched arms, that strive in vain to bless, of Notre Dame des Brebières; past Calais and the glittering heave of the Channel

and Hugh with the sunlight leaking through the yellow blinds of his office in Whitehall, and my uncle dozing over *The Times* in his club, up the railway-line I know so well into the hidden heart of the dales, where the smoke of Wineaster goes straight into the sky.

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

Yes, our griefs turn, at last, to music or to dust.

Into the drone of flies creeps the deeper hum of aircraft. The spell is loosed. One by one a hundred fairy cloudlets pop and dot themselves against the blue. And life slips back towards tea and prose and the slow weary hours of night with its glimmering flares, its crackling, futile fusillades. To-morrow — perhaps — another letter.

September 25th.

No letters. Quiet night; but a shell on No. 2 post this morning—three men badly hit. "Yes, it's a good army",—from someone behind me, as the stretcher-bearers carried them away. "War of attrition"—the sickening mockery! Mutual murder by ones and twos. The French before us here in these sectors lived and let live; do they fight the worse when it comes to it?

Not enough dinner to go round the men; so they tossed the whole dixie over the parapet, sooner than let some go without. Dear lovable fools.

September 26th.

Into reserve last night; just in time; the heaviest shelling I've seen came down on our front line two hours later. Horrible; and yet the infernal splendour of it—the sense of human power, making the whole heaven glare and shake and rattle as no storm of God's I ever knew—the wild chaos of blackness and dazzling light and colour, saffron and crimson and magenta—the greedy savage snarling of the greater shells, sucking the air through their teeth as they hunted their way in pack after pack through the dark heavens overhead! What were the plains of Troy itself and Zeus thundering high on Ida, beside this? Mad, savage, vain—six hundred yards away men were being pounded to death as in some devil's mortar—and yet, unsought, unsown, this wild beauty flowering on the lip of Hell. By day there is hideousness as well—blasted copses like the spines of great festering skeletons, shattered villages adrift on the rolling hillsides like wreckage in wastes of sea. Yet even then it fascinates with its tragic intensity—the landscape of Dante's Hell for a moment revealed to eyes that live. There *is* romance in war. It's mockery that there should be; perhaps a treason to humanity to say there is. Yet there it persists, fantastically irrelevant, yet poignantly real, like the froth that lightly leaps and dances on the grim crest of the wave that overwhelms a whole ship's company. Squalor, foulness, utter boredom as well—yet

at instants this strange repellent fascination, that seized me the first moment I set eyes on Fricourt and Mametz and the great heave of the gaunt uplands of the Somme. And I abandon myself to it when it comes, as to some turbid, heady wine. There is poison in the dregs, and the cold dread of death. Yet it intoxicates. This insignificant "I" loses itself for a moment in a grapple of empires, the agony of a world. And I can forget for that short respite the misery of pity and of love, the torture of being human.

September 28th.

Letters!

WINEASTER,
Sept. 24th, 1915.

MY DARLING,

You mustn't write so. I can't bear it. I see too well what in tenderness for me you are half afraid to hint. Before you hinted it, even, I knew you had thought of that way out. O David, David, write and promise by return that you won't tempt Providence or take the slightest risk you need not, because you think this awful tangle of ours might unravel itself, if you—Don't sacrifice us both again to your awful idol of "how one behaves" Don't think that Philip could come near to fill the void in my life the loss of you would leave—always. How could you think it? I do love him in a strange maternal way. If you were killed, I should try to go on living for his sake. But God knows—could I? I suppose so; people do. I don't understand. They mind frightfully. But they never question if they shall go on—there's always a margin of hope and strength. But I feel as if I had no margin left. You've become everything; it was unutterably foolhardy of me—of us. Thank God for it!

It has been bad with Philip. He has been less furiously bitter, more entreating and appealing. That's harder, even, to bear. Must I deceive him? I did; but while his mind was clouded, it seemed different. It was so inevitable; but now? He says he can steel himself to bear my writing to you and seeing you (O David, the mockery—shall I ever?), provided you cease to be my lover. I will *never* give you up, not for anyone's sake—except your own. But I can temporize. Surely the problem can be let alone till it means something. But he is ill content. Nothing is quite so horrible as jealousy. It attacks the best as much as the meanest; and it spoils and debases them under your eyes. Yet one can no more be in love and not liable to it, than have a body and be exempt from pain. I've told him the past, everything—Cambridge as well as Olympia. It made things worse for the moment with retrospective jealousy. I seemed to have robbed him now even of the months when we seemed happy together. But after that shock, he has grown quieter and gentler and more understanding. He realizes, for the first time, I think, what you must have been through. And yet he cannot endure that it should be true.

Even Mrs. Winton is upset and anxious. She came and talked to me yesterday. "Couldn't I see I was behaving monstrously and trying to have things both ways—Philip's love and yours? I should have chosen and done with it." "And left you to look after Philip?" And I told her how I felt that she had always thought first of herself and next of him, but mighty little of me. She softened at that for the first time. "That's true, that's true. Why didn't you say it before? Why don't you ever stand up to me, instead of going on shamefaced about the house till I think you've no spirit in you at all?" The Wintons are like that; if you touch the right spot, they're curiously fine. But it's so hard to know—for if one touches the wrong one. . . . Yet she has to have a

villain in the piece; and that is you. But there's little she can do to make things better or worse. She'll just stand aloof, reflecting to herself that she always knew there was something fundamentally rotten in the young. And when she decently can, she'll go away.

My darling, don't be worried about me. Philip is being as nice as he can. And don't let that worry you either. I want you, beyond good and evil. As I look back on the tragic waste of it all, and my own faults and foolishness, I am bitterly ashamed; until I think how we have at least loved each other with a love that was neither cheap nor light. MARGARET.

And this from Philip—God help him!

WINEASTER.

What I shall say to you, what I shall call you, I scarcely know. I scarcely know who I am myself. I knew a David Halliday once. But he was not at all like you. Shall I tell you of him? We were great friends once, we had other friends, each of us, but none to compare. He was devotedly fond of me, and kinder (though not fonder —I was just more selfish, then) to me than I was to him. And when I did marry—one whom he was himself in love with, he so mastered himself that I never guessed what he was enduring to save me a moment's disquietude. He went away to forget; and in London I lost him.

Who you are I do not know—unless you are a devil. You came as my guest to Greece; and your repayment was to ruin my life, my mind, my happiness. But that was little to you. You went on to make mock of me, keeping my wife your mistress under my roof. And now that this has happened, what do you propose to do?

O David, what has come over you? Things were so close between us once. I was selfish, self-centred,

perhaps. But we were friends. Will you not make this sacrifice? Strange that I who used to be so proud, should stoop to ask this—but I must have her, I must. She gave herself to me. I shall be good to her, better than I have been. What right have you to her? You have made her wretched, in order to kill a few Germans. It's a hard thing I ask, I know—but is that my fault? Is it so little I have had to bear? If you knew what jealousy was! I don't ask you to stop writing or seeing her; you know what I do ask; if ever you cared for me, give me this one thing. PHILIP.

Poor Philip; but what use is it? It's such folly to talk like this; I wish he hadn't stooped to it. Yet my pity is half an outrage: I do not know myself when it's sincere. I have grown too hard.

September 29th.

I had a bad night last night; caught with ration party in the open, where the trench had been blown in. They must have spotted us starting against the last of the sunset—half-a-dozen salvoes of 4·2 slap into the back half of the party. There was a frightful temptation to keep where I was, at the head of them, and go ahead, instead of back into it. Managed however—though damnably afraid. The men would start lying down in shell-holes, instead of pushing on out of it—I broke my stick across their backs. Not quite the sort of thing they picture the British soldier doing in the papers at home. And then bandaging warm, wet, screaming bodies, in the dark—too frightful. How does one go on? Pride—every-

one's afraid, only some manage not to show it. But the men—without this code of pride? For them, nothing but sheer stoutness of heart. "Well, you can only die once", is apparently their great comfort—more than all the Church Parades of religion. So that's how we go on. And when that stops, I start thinking again. I had a hideous nightmare last night of Philip trying to throw himself into the Swale, down that steep place above "Summer's Pool", and Margaret trying to save him. They struggled horribly on the bank while I watched with that helplessness one has in dreams, till I kicked myself awake and found the rats making Hell's own noise in the dug-out roof.

But I see it all more quietly and clearly now than ever before. There's nothing to be done. If I were to survive the war, the dilemma would raise its horns again. But, even so, the issue would be defined. If Philip should still be jealous, then Margaret must choose one of us. I sound to myself strangely ruthless. Have I become so, or is it because I believe the situation will never arise, the choice never have to be made? Both. I don't want to die. The world is so full still of unexhausted possibilities, of all kinds of things I have not tasted yet. And yet, without knowing it, I may be nearer the bottom than I think. I'm so tired of unhappiness. It has grown with me almost into a habit; as it easily does. And if they could be at all happy together—(I think in the end they might)—I should not revolt against

death. He is a hackneyed *deus ex machina* to invoke; but at least a sure one, the surest of all. I should have escaped at last—after thinking, so often, I had found freedom in what has proved only a new prison. I could never love Margaret better in twenty years with her, though we might be happier together than we have ever been allowed to be. I shall not go out of my way to look for death; but it is perhaps as well that we attack in three days' time . . . Yes, "tout s'en va, tout passe, l'eau coule et le cœur oublie."

It was my fault, I suppose, to begin with. I should not have gone to Greece; it was folly, not heartlessness. I was weaker than I knew then, weaker than circumstance, weaker than desire. Perhaps it might have been better for me if I had been drowned that night in Alpheios. I should have got more cleanly off the stage. Even afterwards, at Olympia, if Philip had kept his head, I could have foregone seeing her, given her up while she had not yet given herself to me. But after that, it was too late. These are not, as I look back, such heinous faults—his, or even mine. And it is a strange world that people should glorify it, when errors so slight are followed by such crashing penalties. I see well enough now, as Hugh said—"better go to the North Pole than risk dividing two people who are happy". But once the harm is done, there is no use in trying atonement. The one whom the two want, must choose. However, this is not very profound

wisdom, considering how much I have paid for it. And it is quite profitless now.

(They are starting an evening hate with 5·9s, damn them!—no peace for an instant.) Would I face another span of such a world? God knows. If Margaret

THE END

MARYMOUNT COLLEGE
TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

Lucas

River flows

8444

8445

AUTHOR

Lucas

TITLE

River flows

Marymount College Library

Tarrytown, New York

1. Encyclopaedias, dictionaries, periodicals and pamphlets are to be used only in the library.

2. Reserved books may be borrowed for one week only.

3. All other books may be retained for two weeks.

4. Two cents a day is charged for each book kept overtime.

5. Injury to books beyond reasonable wear and all losses shall be paid for.

6. No books may be taken from the library without being charged.

G.E.STECHERT&C
ALFRED HAFNER
NEW YORK

Marymount College Library
PR6023.U24 R5 1926
Lucas, F. L. (Frank Laure
The river flows / F. L. Lucas
030101
0 2015 9050738 4